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...DOWN...
*A*mong the Crackers.

By ROSA PENDLETON CHILES.

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Chiles

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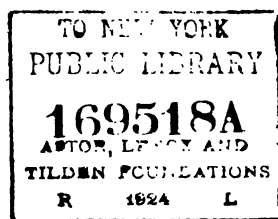






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TO
MARION J. VERDERY
A GEORGIA GENTLEMAN.

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PREFACE.

Though the village, Walesca, has real geographical significance and the old college on the hill is the Rome to which all roads of the section lead, it must not by any means be thought that all, or indeed, any personages in the book have real existence here. Some, ready to draw analogies as well between the characters of a novel and men and women who move in the daily course of life as between Alpine and Rocky mountain scenery, may, indeed, tell me they recognize in one or another a neighbor, an old friend, a student of the college, or some one of whom they have heard; but I, my dear readers, who have known these children of my brain longer than you, fail to identify them with any of the folks of the section. They may indeed possess characteristics known to you in some residents of Cherokee, but I could as well point you to owners of the same in a half dozen other countries or states, for that matter. These characters are in part, of a composite type, possessing qualities not so much of individuals known to you and me as of the class delineated, whether dwellers in the Empire State of the South, or elsewhere; yet in larger part, they are citizens of the more mystic realm of the imagination, adapted to the genuine life of the class described, and that they have taken up their abode in this old Indian village, under the shadow of Pine Log, and under the powerful influences of modern intellectualism, is a compliment to the place, for they had choice of many another in which to live.

Some incidents of the book are true, but these were gathered from a broad area, and by no means all had their occurrence within a day's journey of Walesca. And what if such things happen in the lives of

these, as you have known in the lives of real men and women, dare you say them nay? They have as good right to the happenings of their lives as those you have known, and as for the likeness, why there are fishing parties, dances, courtships, marriages, deaths, murders in Europe as well as here; and if you tell me you saw Mrs. Brown in a yellow gown at church on a Sunday, I can tell you that I saw Mrs. Smith in a yellow gown at church on the very same Sunday in another part of the world. Should the similarity still impress you, so much the better that the characters exist as they do; it will give you a better feeling, I hope, for these new acquaintances; but bear in mind, they *are* new acquaintances; you never knew them before.

By the strange law of contrast, there will be others no doubt, to tell me that they not only have never known these characters before, but do not believe they could exist; to them the genus "Cracker," has meant no more nor less than an idle boaster, good indeed for the amusement he can afford the rest of the world, but so differentiated from it and so fixed in his differentiation as to be past all metamorphosis, or even of vague possibility of approach to the ladder of progress, from the topmost rung of which you now observe him apart; but do you, my grand *messieurs* and *mesdames*, get closer to him, come down from your high post and scan his character face to face, and do not let the ripple of your laughter at his droll remarks drown the fineness of the wit you may find in them; watch him as he plucks an arbutus blossom and places it in the button-hole of his tattered coat; hear from the echo across the way which repeats the sound of his rattling cart as it jostles homeward, the words of an old love song, or of "Nearer my God to Thee;" observe him, if you please, as he stoops over the bier of a little child and leaves on its placid face a trace of the moisture that glistens in his eye when you meet afterward. There! You know him better now, there is everything in the point of view.

DOWN AMONG THE CRACKERS



Down Among The Crackers.

CHAPTER I.

In northern Georgia, among the foothills of the Blue Ridge, is a most interesting and beautiful summit, unknown to history. From its crest on a summer's day one sees various forms of beauty; lengthened shadows spread their trail, softening a hundred tints, and reminding one of a life dwelling under the mellowing influences of the Almighty. One hears the chirp of mating birds, and, above it, the roar of streams rushing down either side, to make fertile twin valleys; sees many a lover's leap, where a precipice looks gaunt upon a plain, many a hiding-place for the fugitive, where bushes lock arms and spread their skirts to protect him; sees curves and crooks and angles and turns, a thousand shades and ten thousand tints, sunshine and shadow, each with a separate influence, but all with an influence for good. The spirit is made tenderer, the heart more loving, the life purer; it is a quiet, peaceful road.

Riding along one day in June, 1880, in restful thought, inspired by such surroundings, I came to a sharp turn in the road, where there came in view an object so foreign to my thought and the sweeter influences of the moment, that I half resented its appearance, and drew rein with a haughty air. Have you never noticed how resentful we become when anything interferes with our tastes or inclinations? Here, amid beauties which the unselfish God had given the world, and in which I was reveling, with heart gushing with gratitude, in an

instant gratitude turned to resentment, merely because of an unsightly object, to whom the mountain, with its mellow influences, as truly belonged as to me, and who possibly needed them more. Certainly he looked as if he needed better influences. Sitting listlessly on a log, with a bundle of pine splinters by his side, slouched hat over his face, chin resting on his rough hand, he was a picture of unkempt, uncared-for humanity.

"My friend, am I on the right road to Pine Log?" I asked.

"I ain't yer friend; I never seed you 'fore now; but the nearest pine log I knows ennything 'bout's down yonder er piece; I don't think you'll git enny splinters off'n it, though, 'caze I's the best splinter-gatherer in these diggins, an' I's done 'ith that log. Is you in the bizness?"

I assured him that I would not interfere with his trade, and that the Pine Log I was looking for was a small village at the foot of the mountain.

"Oh! that ain't Pine Log—that's Town. You see this" (touching the mountain) "'s Pine Log, and them" (pointing to the trees) "'s pine logs, so we calls the place whar folks lives Town. We used to call it 'Possum Trot, 'caze the 'possum trots 'long the pine log, but now we jes' call it Town. I guess this road 'll take you thar; leastwise, it allurs takes me whin I follows it."

He had not risen while saying this, had spoken with as little exertion as possible, and now relapsed into an attitude of silence and ease. I had seen peasants abroad, the "mountain whites" and "dirt-eaters" of our own country, and had heard of the "cracker," but I had never seen the strange, ignorant boaster who went by that name. Now, however, I was confident that a specimen was before me. I soon became more interested in the boy than in the mountain, but was more embarrassed in his presence than I have been in circles of the great. While considering what to say to best

ingratiate myself into his favor, he suddenly broke the silence himself by asking:

"Who be you ennyhow, and what you standin' thar lookin' 't me fur? I thought you wanted ter go ter Town. You kin jes' git thar now 'fore night; 'tain't profitable bizness nohow ter stan' an' look 't folks, an' 'tain't p'lite."

I accepted the rebuke, begged his pardon, and told him that I had no business at Pine Log; that I was simply riding through the country, and had been told that I might find a resting-place there that night, but that if he would allow me I would rather stay with him.

"I don't know whether dad'll let you or not; he don't like trav'lin' folks much—ses they ought ter be 't home, whar honest folks stays."

I told him that I was there for a good purpose.

The truth was, my mission was to learn the real condition of the Georgia "cracker." An earnest, ardent teacher of a little school in the village of Walesca, six miles from Pine Log mountain, had asked me to come and devise with him some plan of saving the "cracker" from himself. The plan was for me to visit the homes of these peculiar people without their knowledge of my purpose, and gain the key to the "cracker's" soul.

The boy looked at me distrustfully for some seconds, and then blurted out:

"Stranger trav'lin' man, you got ter tell me who you is; I don't take no man ter dad's house 'out I knows him."

This was certainly a reasonable demand, and easily answered in an ordinary instance, but it was embarrassing in my case. I did not care to assume a fictitious name, for fear the deceit, afterwards discovered, would destroy any influence I might gain over him; and I did not care to give my real name, because known in some sections of that country, and he might discover my purpose and foil my plans. To gain time for thought I said:

"You have not told me your name."

"That makes no diff'rence; the stranger what's jes' come tells his name fust in these diggins, an' you'd better out 'ith yourn *now*."

I still hesitated, and, with no excitement whatever, but lazily drawling out an oath, he said:

"I'd hit you in the head 'ith wun er them pine-knots" (pointing to his splinters) "if I won't tired an' you wus worth it; you ain't no 'count; dad's right; I never seed er trav'lin' man what wus worth throwin' er splinter at, sayin' nothin' o' stayin' all night at folks' house."

My situation was unfortunate. A saving thought came to my mind, however, and I answered:

"My name, my young friend, is Ramla;" which was true, and yet not true.

"I ain't yer friend—told you wunst—an' I ain't a-goin' ter be er friend ter no man what behaves as you do: more'n that, I ain't young; I's twenty-one day arter ter-morrer; I'se goin' ter sell them splinters an' make mam bile me er 'lasses stew 'ith the money.—My name's Bill—Mr. Bill Collins. Now, I'll show you the way ter dad's."

He arose as lazily as Van Winkle after twenty years' sleep, and stooped to lift the pine splinters, but I had already thrown them across my saddle, and taking my horse's bridle, which was trailing in the road, I was ready to proceed when the "cracker" had fairly gotten to his feet.

"Hu! you're er clever man arter all, but you needn't ter be in sich er hurry; we takes things easy here, no use hurryin'—makes folks die too soon; I wants ter live. Some folks got no jedgment nohow; you'd jes' 's well a-tuk five minutes as wun ter git ready ter go 'ith me, specially's I taken five; enny man what stays 'ith me 's got ter do 's I do, 'caze I ain't a goin' ter change. See?"

I acknowledged the necessity as gracefully as I

could, and immediately adapted my pace to his, amusing myself trying to estimate the rate. Careful calculation made it a mile and a quarter an hour. The way was interesting, however, by a serpentine path down the mountain; wild flowers charmed the eye with their beauty and refreshed the soul with their fragrance. A soul that flowers do not move is but clay, and I wondered if the cracker boy's was. I was admiring a bank of magnificent scarlet and white and cream and pink azalias, when the boy stooped, brushed away the dead leaves, and with the delicacy of a woman, plucked a rare arbutus flower, belated in blooming. Turning to me, he said:

"You like them big honeysuckles; I think this is er purty thing."

The soul was not all clay. I felt more hopeful. I took the bud, as cheered as were the Pilgrims long ago by the greeting of the same happy-omened mayflower. The mayflower now lies preserved in my study; its prognostics of good have come true. Its petals are brown; they are old, as my story soon will be, but the flower will always remain as a "sweet remembrance" of a hopeful, happy past.

Night was coming on apace; the sun had gone below the hill; I turned from nature's beauties to this strange human being:

"Bill, how do you spend these long summer days?"

"Well, I gits up whin the sun does, helps mam feed the steer an' the donkey an' the dog, whittle 'round till she gits er bite ter eat fur me an' dad an' the chillun; thin I whittle's whin I feels like 't; goes ter sleep 'gin whin I don't. 'Bout the time the sun gits half over the mount'n, I hitches Bill—that's my donkey—ter the splinter cart, an' goes ter town—sometimes ter this town, sometimes ter that un" (pointing to either side of the mountain.) "Folks don't use meny splinters in the summer, though, an' so I don't go ever' day now. Whin I does go, though, I sells my splinters an' 'muses

the folks in town some whin they don't 'muse me. I comes home ter dinner; thin I lounges 'round till night, without I feels like comin' up here ter git pine. The days I goes ter town though, I don't giner'ly git pine; an' the days I gits pine, I don't giner'ly go to town. I takes life easy—can't 'ford ter die—dunno whar folks lives arter they's dead. 'Thar's er preacher comes here sometimes an' tells me an' dad er heap 'bout hebin, but I don't think he knows what he's talkin' 'bout; don't much b'lieve he'll ever know nothin' 'bout hebin, 'caze he tried ter cheat me in er donkey trade wunst, an' got 'bilin' mad whin I wouldn't let him do 't. Hu! nobody beats me in er donkey trade. I's jes' the bes' man in these parts whin it comes ter 'pairin' mules an' donkeys. Now, mam's er leetle better'n me on the ox trade."

I wondered what the father was good for.

Bill continued: "I knowed I was tryin' ter cheat the preacher, but he sed he didn't know he wus tryin' ter cheat me; mebbe he didn't, but you don't giner'ly fool me. I tells from the cut o' er man's eye how much cheatin's in his head."

"And can you not be discovered in the same way?" I asked.

"Naw; takes er better man 'n discivered Americy ter tell whin I means ter cheat. 'caze, you see, I allus means ter cheat, an' I allus looks the same."

We turned a curve just then, and I saw near the foot of the mountain a small farm, scarcely more than an ordinary field, a log hut with no glass in the windows, merely sliding boards; a door straining to stand in place on one hinge, broken-down steps, and a dirt chimney, whose top just reached the low roof.

In front of the hut, with legs crossed and arms folded, sat a dwarfed object that might have been termed a man, though he bore little resemblance to this highest order of creatures. He was smoking, and from the distance of many yards the vile odor of drugged tobacco was sickening.

"That's dad," said the boy; and, as we approached, he continued: "Dad, this is Mr. Ramla; he's er trav-'lin man, but I think he's er right good chap, an' I wish you'd let him stay all night 'ith me."

The man arose, offered me a rickety chair, and began smoking again.

"Stranger, d' you smoke? Bill, bring t'other pipe."

I answered "No," more thankful than ever before that I did not smoke.

Bill, meanwhile, was attending to my horse. He turned him out in the yard to graze with the wonderful donkey, which was no larger than a large dog. It was uncurried, ill kempt, and bore the stamp of the people's life.

I talked of the country, the crops, and everything that I thought of interest to the old cracker, but he seemed indifferent to almost every subject, as listless and as devoid of thought as a mortal can be. In despair I looked for the boy, and saw him walking across the field by the side of a woman, who was leading an old gray ox. The ox and the woman wore the same unkempt appearance as the house, the donkey, the boy, and the man; if there was a difference, the woman looked least cared for of all. With ragged dress, hair disheveled and matted, sleeves rolled to the elbow, showing brown, hard-muscled arms, she was a forbidding object, and yet my mission drew me to her.

"Bill," called the father, "the old 'oman 'll 'tender that steer. You come here; fill this pipe. How many times must I tell you ter let wimmen do the wuk? Wimmen must wuk, an' men must rest. I have ter set here all day ter see that yer mam plows the ox an' hoes the corn right. It's leetle rest I'll git watchin' you too. I want yer ter be er gintleman o' ease, an' lemme be wun too. I's glad," he said, turning to me, "that all my chillun's boys; gals wants ter do nothin', an' has ter be watched all the time. That old 'oman's the bother o' my life. Sal, feed the steer and git supper

right away," he called to his wife. "Stranger, is you married?"

I thought of a cozy, quiet home where a woman reigned supreme, of soft, tender hands, unused to hard labor, of a heart never hurt nor hardened by brutal commands, and somehow I thought better of myself than I was wont to think.

Bill asked if I wanted to "tidy myself a bit," and I followed him into the poor shell said to shelter a home. The term "home" sounded so empty when applied here as to seem a mockery. The odor of fried meat which filled the place was preferable to the smell of tobacco outside, and I found later that it was better than the combination of fumes inside. "Indeed," I thought, "every evil hath its good," for the inmates of the small cabin were doubtless kept from many a foul disease by the frequent fumes of cooking that permeated everything, and passed out through crack and crevice. It was well, too, that the logs of the hut left room for air and light to pass in and drive out some impurities. The room was divided by a curtain discolored by smoke. On one side, Bill explained, was the home "of mam an' dad an' seven chil-lun;" on the other was the home of his brother, younger than himself, his wife and one child—twelve in the space of a room fourteen by twelve.

We were asked to supper. I was formally introduced to the mother and other members of the family.

"Madam," I said, "I have just been remarking to your husband upon this fine country."

"Yes," she said, "it's fine 'nough fur dogs an' men, but it's turrible on women an' steers."

I looked at the hound at the old cracker's feet, and felt the truth of her saying.

CHAPTER II.

The next thought was of my resting-place that night. My friend in Walesca had been thoughtful enough of my comfort to suggest my taking a hammock, as the nights were so warm that it might be more pleasant out of doors. So I told Bill that, as he was already supplied with two bedfellows in his little brothers, I would not be so inconsiderate as to cramp him more, and I proceeded to swing my hammock as far from the house as possible.

Under the influence of a favoring breeze that brought from the mountain perfume of flowers and trees, I went to sleep in peace and comfort, and with even a nascent hope of a better life for the cracker. The memory of the arbutus blossom brightened darker thoughts, and I dreamed that Bill, in white robes, stood beside my narrow, swinging couch as a type of new life in the future—"of light in darkness." Upon his head was a wreath of arbutus flowers, delicate and beautiful.

I was awakened by the sound of a great champing near me, and an awful, unmistakable bray, and I discovered that Bill, the donkey, having to divide his store of grass with my horse had found the division too short, and was revenging himself for the invasion by trying to convert his master into grass before his time. Of course I resented the insult, but later I thought better of the donkey's feelings, and treated him to a hearty meal of corn.

Sunrise is scarcely more beautiful in California than on Pine Log. I walked to the top of the mountain to see it. The dews had crept out in the still of night to catch the sun's first rays and store away some new beams of his marvelous light. Oh! you rogues, I have caught you. You may blush, as a roseate beam falls up-

on you, then pale with the shades of death as you give up yourself and your stolen light-beams to valley, meadow and mountain moss-beds as a reasonable sacrifice to justice, but I shall see these during all the day, and they will tell the story of your roguery by the fresh life and beauty that you impart.

I retraced my steps to the cabin. The poor cracker woman was feeding her ox. I relieved her of the task, and told her that I thought of my wife, and did it for her sake, and possibly she remembered the time, when, before their marriage, her liege lord had, in his rough way, spoken a word of sentiment. However it was, a great rough hand brushed the stray hair from her face, and a glistening moisture trembled in her eye, like the diamond dew-drops I had just seen tremble on the grass, and I thought other gems were out stealing the sun-beams.

She said: "I reckon you loves yer wife better'n Jim loves me."

I didn't feel inclined to dispute it, but I answered: "Men sometimes love their wives more than they show that they love them."

The words had a cold, hard, doleful comfort in them, as words, when facts combat them, often have.

Bill came out, and the woman went in to prepare breakfast.

"I say, Mr. Man," accosted Bill, "don't you want ter go ter town 'ith me ter-day ter sell splinters an' buy 'lasses, or is you got ter go 'way! Stranger, I likes you. I wish you wouldn't go."

I could not lose my opportunity.

"Why, Bill, I shall be delighted to stay and to go to town with you. You are very kind to ask me. Let me help you feed the donkey, though I really do not think he should be hungry;" and I told him the circumstance of the night.

After doubling into unrecognizable shapes, accompanied by hearty haw-haws of laughter, for a minute or two, Bill spoke:

"Well, ef that don't beat all; that donkey's a cur'us animule. He really beats me sometimes, and that's hard ter do. He gits contrary, you know—don't want ter haul splinters—gits awful sick, an' rolls an' groans worse'n dad whin he had mumps. You see dad tried ter holler, and ever' time he opened his mouth er pain struck him, fust on wun side, an' thin on t'other, an' his jaws got cotched worse'n lockjaw; an' of all the faces! You know dad ain't very good-lookin' no time. Well, Bill fell down in the middle o' the road wun day 'ith a kinder spell like dad's, rolled his eyes, an' opened his mouth back to his ye's, tryin' ter tell me what's the matter. He fooled me; man can't do it, but that donkey did. I unhitched him, tied him ter er bush, an' went home ter git mam ter come an' docter him. Dad won't at home, an' so mam come an' brought lin'ment an' stuff fer Bill, an' what d' you reckon? Bill had done broke the rope an' wuz gone; thar won't er hair o' that donkey ter be seen. So mam an' me had ter haul the splinters an' 'bout the time we got home, an' wuz pantin' fur breath, I looked up on the mountain an' thar wus Bill grazin' peaceful-like. I wus too tired ter go arter him. He know'd I'd be, an' so he'd hid till I got home; an' he grazed an' frisked 'round more'n enny donkey you ever see; an' 'bout night he come home an' rubbed his head agin my arm, an' tried ter put his hoofs on me, playful-like, an' sorry, too, 'til I had ter laugh 't his sense, an' couldn't beat him. Ain't no donkey got's much sense's Bill. I think he gits it from me. Now, stranger, if you'll stay 'ith the two Bills er day er two, we'll teach you some sharp tricks, too."

I accepted the invitation, and breakfast over, we prepared for the trip to town. The cart could not hold Bill and the splinters too, and the donkey could not pull both. So I left my horse and walked with the boy. The time was beguiled by many a quaint story told by the cracker,—each egotistical and boastful—experiences that made his life. I remember three of the stories.

"You see, we trades down here and over yonder," (pointing to Pine Log and Walesca.) "Whin we gits in debt 't wun place, we goes ter t'other; whin mam can't git things she giner'ly sends me, an' I giner'ly gits 'em. I come down here wunst fur corfee. 'Mornin', Mr. Storekeeper; I wants er half er pound o' corfee.' 'No, Bill, you can't have 't, nor nothin' else here 'less you pays fur it.' 'How d' you know I ain't a-goin' ter pay fur 't? I giner'ly pays my debts.' I had twenty cents. I won't a-goin' ter let him have it, though, but I didn't tell him so; I laid it down on the counter, an' thin I sed, 'You know my donkey, Bill?' Oh, yes, he know'd him; an' thinkin' he'd like ter hear somethin' 'bout his acquaintance, I tole him 'bout Bill's foolin' me an' gittin' sick. Thin I sed, 'Don't you think he's er smart animule?' He sed smart 's he ever seed, handed me the corfee, an' I picked up the twenty cents an' walked out. Whin I'd got 'bout fifty yards frum the store, I holler'd back ter him, 'I say, mister, Bill ain't half's smart's his master.' We wus agoin' home thin, an' I didn't have no splinters ter haul; he couldn't 'a' caught me in ten miles. Well, I didn't 'tend not ter pay the man, so 'bout er month arter that, I went in ag'in. He wanted ter drive me outen the store, and sed he'd have that twenty cents. 'Of course,' I sed, 'that's what I come ter town fur, jes' 'spressly ter pay you that twenty cents. I allus pays my debts—told you that wunst.—But, say, Bill's larned er smarter trick'n gittin' sick. Wantter hear 't?' 'Naw, I don't. I'se tired o' you an' yer donkey, too.' 'All right; I talks ter no man what's tired o' me, an' Bill don't stand 'fore yer store no more.' 'But gimme that money,' he sed. 'Hold on, mister; you's tired o' me an' my donkey; now you kin git tired o' waitin' fur yer money.' 'I's tired o' waitin' fur it now, I tell you, is what I's talkin' 'bout.' 'Oh, thin, 'tain't me an' Bill; it's the money; thin I'll trade 'ith you some more; here's yer twenty cents. Now gimme thirty cents' worth o' t'bacco; I chaws er heap these days.' He

wrapped the t'bacco, handed it ter me an' sed, 'Whar's the thirty cents?' I felt 'round in my pocket, an' it warn't thar; thin I turned my pockets wrong side out, an' thar wus er great big hole in wun o' 'm; I'd jes' cut it ten minutes 'fore. I sed, 'I been standin' by that donkey, an' I knows he's bit er hole in my pocket an' swallowed the money; I'll choke him now.' Bill saw me comin' an' galloped off. I run arter him, an' hol-lered back, 'Mister, the new trick that Bill's larned is that foolin' er storekeeper is more fun 'n foolin' me.' I'd trained Bill er week ter run whin he saw me comin'. I had more trouble teachin' him not ter run arterwards than I had teachin' him ter run. He wanted ter have er race ever' time I tried ter ketch him. I went back ter the store in 'bout er week, an' that man wus so mad he wouldn't speak ter me. Thar was another man standin' by, an' I sed, 'Mister, I wish you'd tell that storekeeper somethin' fur me.' He sed he would. 'Tell him that Bill's donkey's mighty sick, poor's er snail, but his conscience hurts him fur treatin' him so bad, an' I helped him down here this mornin' ter 'pologiz.' The storekeeper laughed in spite o' tryin' not ter. 'Tell him Bill's bad off; he'd give 'most ennything fur er bottle o' lin'-ment. Tell him ter state the price, an' we'll pay fur it—got the money right here.' The storekeeper took down er bottle. 'Twenty cents,' sed he. 'Now, ax him,' sed I, 'ter square 'counts 'ith me; I owes him thirty cents fur t'bacco an' twenty cents fur lin'ment, an' he owes me fifty cents fur larnin' him how donkeys kin be trained—cheap larnin'—ain't that fair, stranger?' He sed 'twus, an' I left er crowd o' folks hurrahin' fur Bill an' his donkey. But the storekeeper looked grum. I got er lot fur twenty cents that time, but he got more; I think I lost in the barg'in, but I won't a-goin' ter stan' up 'g'inst the cart an' look grum, like he did 'ginst the counter.'

When we reached Pine Log I thought Bill might be inclined to enter into "er leetle fun," as he termed it, with the storekeeper that morning, but he exclaimed:

"Thar's er gintleman's waitin' fur me, an' I've got ter invite my sweetheart ter er 'lasses stew b'sides; hurry up, mister;" and we soon left.

We stopped to ask Bill's sweetheart to his party. Her home was a short distance from the road, and I offered to stay and take care of the cart and donkey, while he went to see her, but Bill said:

"Naw, I wouldn't have you miss seein' that gal fur nuthin'."

So the cart rattled through the bushes until it stopped at the young woman's door. The house was not unlike Bill's, not so large, nor so prettily situated, but cleaner and more inviting.

A fresh, beautiful, violet-eyed, blossom-cheeked mountain maiden of perhaps eighteen summers came to the door, blushing, but a little bold.

"Mornin', Mol," said her lover; "this is Mr. Ramla." To me, "This is my gal, Miss Mol Smith. What do you think o' her?"

This called for a knightly remark, which a little woman at home keeps me in practice making. Miss Smith's color deepened at what I said regarding Bill's taste and their future bliss, and she exclaimed in almost shrieking tones:

"Bill Collins, I's half er mind not ter marry you. You tells ever'body in the country I's goin' ter."

"Thin I won't tell nobody else. Mol, my birthday is ter-morrer. Will you come?"

"I got ter go ter town ter-morrer; can't come; mighty sorry."

"Does you go ter town at night? I didn't know that, Mol, or I'd 'a' bin goin' 'ith you all this time."

"Naw, I goes in the day. Ain't you got no sense, Bill Collins? You 'spose I could trade 't nights?"

"Oh, well, thin, you kin come; my party's at night; I was born at night. I'll come arter you, Mol;" and he drove off.

"We goin' ter git married nex' fall," he said.

"And where will you live!" I asked, remembering the little divided room of such small capacity.

"I think we'll live at her house. You see she's the onliest child; her dad's bin dead many er day, an' she an' her mam lives there all alone; 'tain't the place fur women ter be by theirselves, though ever'body r'spects their loneliness. Thar's plenty o' room in the house, an' on the farm too, an' dad's crowded now. Stranger, I don't b'lieve I'll let Mol work like mam does, would you? Mam gets so tired some days, an' sometimes she wants ter leave dad; but he keeps her down purty close. Somehow, I want my wife ter be with me some an' talk an' love me. But 'tain't the fashion here. I dunno what I'll do."

On reaching the eminence just above his house, we saw a woman madly throwing up her hands, children huddled in a heap, and heard heart-rending shrieks. We hurried on. The rickety chair in front of the door had fallen; pale, and with agonized expression, the old cracker lay, where for twenty-five years he had sat watching his wife work. The last watch was over, and the woman, miserable in his death as she had been in his life, cried:

"Stranger, I loved him if he didn't love me."

Bill shook and called his father, then said: "Dad's dead." Putting his arms around his mother, he whispered: "Wun more widder 'oman, but her son's er man now."

I picked up the old pipe and placed it in the dead cracker's hand. He looked more natural then.

CHAPTER III.

The old cracker had died when no one was near; a coroner's jury became necessary. They wanted to move him, but I told them the jury must be summoned first. There the cracker lay in a horrid, awful heap, with a frown that furrowed deep his brow; and grief was loud about him. We watched; there was nothing to do but watch, and the scene was sadder because of the helpless watching.

The jury came and returned the verdict: "We, the coroner's jury, summoned to sit over the body of James Collins, do render the verdict that he came to his death from heart disease."

The physician explained to me: "Smoker's heart; inveterate smoking and inertness." I asked him to insert this in the verdict; it might be a warning to other smoking idlers. He did so.

Friends and relatives collected around the dead cracker; and the house and yard were full of people. Many a worthier man has been laid to rest with fewer about him. Some came through sympathy, others through love of excitement, all through curiosity. I proposed to Bill that I should go back to Walesca, but he said no, I must see the old man buried.

"Mr. Ramla, we want ter put dad 'way decent, he never did much fur us, but he wus dad, you know, an' mam won't hear ter nothin' but havin' him buried right. And thin, Mr. Ramla, dad won't er mean man; he stayed 't home an' let other folks alone; he jes' done nothin', an' made mam wuk too hard. But I dunno what I'll do. I kin make er pine coffin, but that won't do. You reckon they'd credit me an' lemme make it up in splinters?"

I told him that I would be glad to see that his father was buried decently, to leave it all with me, and comfort his mother. Slapping me on the shoulder, he said:

"Stranger, some day you'll git yer pay. Bill Collins's nothin' but yer splinter boy, but he'll pay you, sure."

"Bill," I said, "remember that, I'll call on you for the pay soon, but it will not be in money."

"Ennything, Mr. Ramla—wuk or ennything else."

My horse, with one from Pine Log, was sent to Cartersville. All night people came and went, offering to the bereaved family the most doleful comfort.

"Ef you'd 'a' been here and seed him die, what er comfort it'd a' been, Sister Sal. I allus wants ter see my folks die."

"Ef he'd jes' been er chirch member, you'd 'a' knowed whar he is, but you dunno now."

"Whar you'd be, you sinner, ef you'd 'a' been tuk off suddint?" some one remarked.

"Sister Sal, I know you'll miss him sittin' thar watchin' you plow, but the ole man'll never be thar no more. I likes fur my ole man ter watch me in the field; I'll wuk, jes' gimme er man. Corn 'pears ter grow better, an' cotton looks whiter. What ef he do beat you sometimes; you gits over 't."

"Sorry fur you, Sister Sal. Husband's gone forevermore."

"How you know she won't git another wun!" blurted out a boy.

"Never!" the widow shrieked.

And so the night passed. All the sacredness of grief was absent; there was none of the quiet mourning of hearts bowed down that bespeaks the higher nature; all was uncontrollable and showy. Showy grief is like showy dress; both emanate from low minds.

The men were smoking. I said:

"My friends, have you seen the verdict of the coroner's jury?"

They had not. I showed it to them.

Sickened with all I walked out upon the mountain. One broad sheet of silver light shimmered along its side; it was restful there. I heard a groan near by. Here, too? The groaning ceased, then began again; a heavy step approached. A sudden fear came over me that maybe I had come to the mountain to meet a worse fate than I had left. Some of the crackers had heard my offer to Bill to bury his father; I wondered if they thought I had money. The object was close to me; it was a man.

"Mr. Ramla."

"Bill, you frightened me."

We sat down.

"Stranger—though you don't 'pear ter be er stranger—I don't feel jes' right; they're all mournin' an' groanin' down yonder; dunno why I don't feel that er way. He wus my father; I orter, it seems, but I didn't love dad 'nough, I reckon. I thought I loved him much's mam did though; don't 'pear so now. What's the matter 'ith me?"

I talked to him very quietly; his feeling was better than that of the others, I thought. He seemed better satisfied after a little while, and went to his mother. I offered him my hammock, and quietly beckoning her to him, he said:

"Mam, thar ain't no use o' this."

He persuaded her to lie in the hammock, and threw himself on the grass by her side. Worn out with physical effort she fell asleep.

I heard on all sides: "How kin Sal sleep! Don't believe she keered nothin' fur Jim, nohow. What scan'lous behavior!"

Her sister said; "I'll wake Sal. She shan't b'have so indecent."

I said: "Don't disturb her;" and they did not.

The next morning preparations were made for the interment. The casket had come. On its face were the

words, "At Rest." They seemed a mockery. We buried him near the door; his wife requested it. My friend from Walesca, who was minister as well as school teacher, came. Scarcely anything was said about the old cracker; the Lord was made prominent. Some friends thought that the cracker's virtues should have been emphasized; I thought they should have been emphasized in life.

The people all commented on the fine burial. "Jim never seed nothin' like it while he wus 'live. Wonder ef he'll rest good in the coffin? Strangers is good folks sometimes."

They went home, and the place was as quiet as if nothing of the kind had happened in ten years. The high physical tension and the relaxation were equally intense; I wonder the cracker does not die young.

My friend and I talked over the condition. My report was encouraging, and we decided that I should remain among the people for a time, going to Walesca occasionally for relief from the strain.

Helping the world is trying work; he who undertakes the smallest portion of it finds much to discourage, feels his own insignificance and need of help; grows weary, falls, rises, is strengthened, falls again. Oh! the weariness of trying; and yet he who does not undertake to bless the world in his day and generation is a failure. Be encouraged, laborer for humanity, faint not.

Day struggles with the gathering shades of night. Great banks of clouds form as fortifications, like walls of granite, with battlements of fury and bases of darkness. Battalions march in line in their uniforms of purple and crimson and blue and gold, with trimmings of pink and silver and cream and emerald. They salute the retiring sun in his jeweled armor of light-beams, scintillating in marvelous brightness, and the battle in the clouds begins. Back and back and back the forces of day are driven, until their colors blend in one gor-

geous, nameless hue. They yield, salute earth, slowly retire, and "good-night" is flashed by a rare beam upon the army's banner. Sometimes a low murmur of thunder beats time for the march. My soul catches the last faint strain of the marshal band of this strange army in the clouds; "Glory to God in the Highest," and in rapturous, reverent praise my soul answers, "Amen."

In wonderful peace I turn from day to the hastening shades of night, and the watch of the evening star. And so stars are born of struggle; and hope has the same parentage.

"Do not weary in well doing, for ye shall reap if ye faint not," my friend said when I told him that I was already tired of the work.

"If ye faint not!" I felt ashamed.

Although I had been so discouraged by the sudden revelation of the people's condition at old James Collins' funeral, yet when I thought of Bill the prospect seemed encouraging. I thought that the young crackers might be persuaded to better their existence, if the old ones might not. In Bill great lumps of character lay hidden and latent, which a chance circumstance now and then revealed as mighty possibilities. When he spoke of not allowing Mol to work, how encouraged I had felt! And when he had shown a quieter spirit than the rest of the crackers after his father's death, how hopeful I had been! Then the thought of the arbutus blossom; I could not forget that, with its happy omen. Bill would yet rise to a higher life, and with himself elevate his companions, and the foundation of substantial good would be laid.

I asked him about the occupations of the people; I knew they were not industrious as a rule. They were farmers and gold-washers and saloon-keepers and distillers. I determined to visit every one of them in that section, if possible, and told Bill so. He could easily go with me, he said. I thought from his tone that he expected to have a good deal of fun at my expense, but he was very polite, and seemed really to like me.

I waited some time after his father's death, both out of respect to the family and to learn more of the Collinses. My friend had said that they were a fair type of the cracker. They were thoroughly ignorant but not altogether bad people. With all Bill's boasts of cheating, I could not but believe that it was more for fun than for profit that he practiced it. I might have thought him a sharp, shrewd rascal but for his *boasts* of meanness. Conceit was his most prominent characteristic. He firmly believed himself the smartest individual in his section, and wanted everyone else to think so. He would not have cheated, as he regarded cheating; his open way of exercising his shrewdness relieved his conscience of blame. "Every man should be able to take care of his own affairs," was his law.

"Ef they can't help my cheatin' 'm, it's thur look-out an' not mine," he said; "I's lookin' out fur Bill."

CHAPTER IV.

"Bill, I want to go to see some of your friends. Will you take me?" I asked one day.

He cheerfully consented.

"My nex' neighbor's er grocery man."

"Then why don't you get your groceries from him instead of going to Pine Log or Walesca? His place is nearer, and you would not have trouble with the store-keepers. I suppose your neighbor is your friend?"

"'Course he's my friend—that is, his boy is. Me an' him wus raised t' gether. The man that keeps the grocery's ole's dad wus. But you dunno what you talkin' 'bout. Folks can't drink liquor fur breakfas' dinner an' supper. They'd be drunk all the time. I didn't know you 'proved of drinkin' 'tall; thought you wouldn't want to go ter see er man that kep' liquor."

"I understood you to say a grocery."

"You understood right. Grocery's er place whar folks sells whiskey; thought you know'd that."

I did not know it, but when I visited the place Bill's words were verified.

On the way we talked of the change in the home life that his father's death would make.

"The craps ain't goin' ter suffer, fur dad didn't make 'm, an' the house ain't goin' ter fall no sooner, but it'll fall in 'bout er week ef I don't steady it, an' t'bacco 'll cos' less; an' what kin I do that I couldn't er done ef dad had er lived?"

"There's one thing, Bill. You spoke of not allowing Mollie to work when you marry. Could you not help your mother now?"

"Bless you, stranger! I hadn't thought o' that. You see, I'se so used ter seein' mam out in the field that

I hadn't somehow thought she couldn't be thar. I s'pose I must wuk; wuk's purty hard, though. You see, the steer gits *contrary*, an' the sun gits hot, an' I gits mad. I tried 't wun day, an' I didn't git over 't fur er month. I sed thin if the family wanted enny corn an' cotton an' sorghum, mam'd have ter raise 'm. I could live on blackberries in the summer an' rabbits in the winter. We don't raise no sorghum now, 'caze the steer ate so much wunst that it died, an' it cos' like ever'thin' ter git er 'nother wun. Dad sed 'twus sorghum; I think 'twus old age and starvin' that kilt the steer. You see dad was 'sper'mentin' on how little the steer could eat, and the steer objected to the 'sper'ment. Well, I reckon I'll have ter help mam, an' then Mol'll be better satisfied ter see how I's goin' to treat her. Women's cur'us folks. Somethings they b'lieves 'fore you tell 'm, and somethings you have ter prove. I'll plow that steer ter-morrer."

We had reached the neighbor's home. Above the unpainted door was the word, "Grocery." Bill walked in.

"Mr. Jones, this is er bad mornin' fur customers. Here's er pro'hibition man. Don't offer him no groceries, 'caze he don't want none; an' don't offer me none, 'caze he won't drink." Turning to me, he said, "Ain't that right—never drink out'n yer frien' 'll drink."

"Honor among thieves, and courtesy among crackers," I thought. Bill prided himself upon being polite, and he was. I spoke very cordially to Mr. Jones. He was grum in his reply.

"Why do you call this a grocery?" I asked.

"'Caze it means the same thing as grog, an' sounds better. You must not have no larnin'."

I had not in those matters, and I did not like my teacher. The shop was full of barrels, and the floor was wet with dripping whiskey. The odor was deadly to a man unaccustomed to it. I wanted to go, but I asked some questions first.

"Does your business pay?"

"Pays me. Don't reckon it pays nobody else, 'caze I keeps the money. But folks can't keep drunk; the more liquor they buy, the less they got to buy with. I makes 'em pay purty high, too, don't I Bill? Can't make whiskey fur nothin'."

"Do you make your own whiskey?"

"Naw; but I tetches it up er leetle arter I gits it— goes further."

"How do you do that?" I asked.

"Well, it's none er yer bizness; guess you wants tu larn how, though; pro'bition folks can't be trusted. You'd like ter git into some o' them barrels now ef you thought you could do 't 'out my knowin' 't. Thar's er empty wun thar, an' you kin see what's in the bottom; thin you kin go down ter the spring an' see ef 'tain't a-goin' dry, an' you'll know jes' how the thing's did."

I went out to see the barrel. The bottom had a green circle around the margin, and was covered with a hard, brown crust. I succeeded in breaking the crust. It was four inches thick, and of a mean quality of tobacco. The green ring was arsenic. I asked what he did with the empty barrels.

"Use 'm fur this as long as they stand; use ter try ter use 'm as washtubs arter that, but the clothes pizened me."

This was the effect upon the cuticle. What was the effect upon the stomach?

"Law, Bill, I furgot you wuz thar."

"I thought you'd furgot it. That's the way you cheats me, is it? Very well; I gits ahead o' you."

"It won't hurt you, Bill. I jes' likes ter disgust pro'bition men. They don't come ter see but wunst; I allurs skeers 'm off."

I told him that I was glad to have met him, and would be glad to call again. We went out. The man came to the door and called:

"Bill, what'd you say that chap's name wuz?"

"I didn't say," replied Bill; and we walked on. "You see, I didn't tell 'im yer name, 'caze it ain't safe fur er man ter come foolin' 'round er grocery er still 'less he 'proves of the bizness. You needn't be 'fraid, though, I knows jes' how to git 'long in this country."

Truly he did, and if he should be grateful to me for any effort of mine to raise him to a higher plane of living, I should be grateful to him for my life more than once. The crackers are a quiet, harmless people unless you antagonize the whiskey traffic; moonshiners and their confederates are desperate.

"Say, don't yer want er lot er fun?" said Bill. "Dad's so recent dead I dunno whether I orter try 't er not; but that won't 'sturb dad. I's got er rooster what'll fight, an' thar's er boy down here's got 'nother. I see him comin'."

A tall, lank boy approached.

"Bob, this is my friend, Mr. Ramla. He wants to see our chickens fight. I'll bring mine down this evenin'."

I said I did not care to witness the chicken fight, but I should be glad to call on the young man.

"Bob, he jes' tole me 'fore you come 'bout the chicken fight, but he's modest, an' don't want ter tell you. These folks," he explained to me, "'ll think you's crazy; ever' man here goes ter er chicken fight."

We went. Bob had collected quite a crowd.

"What's the bet, Bill?"

"Chaw 'g'inst chaw."

"Aw! I got plenty o' t'bacco."

"Well, ef my rooster beats, I'll take yourn; an' ef yourn beats, you'll take mine."

"That's er goner. I gits er 'nother rooster this day."

And so the fight began. Bob's rooster advanced and presented his spurs in quite a military manner.

"Hu! Bob, he must er been goin' ter the college."

"I's the college," he said, touching himself with pride.

"Very well; go it," cried Bill; and the roosters fought.

When the sight became sickening, I said:

"Bill, stop!—this is barbarous."

His rooster just then happened to be master of the fight, and of course Bill was willing to stop, but Bob was not.

"Let 'm rest er minute, thin," said Bill.

"All right."

Bill took his rooster in his arms, boasted a good deal, and made the other boy so mad that he proposed to fight.

"Naw, we never come here fur that. This ain't er feller fight; this is er cock fight."

"Let 'm fight, thin."

"All right; 'go it, boots, 'ith yer spurs on.'"

Bill's rooster struck his antagonist a deadly blow with a steel spur that had not been noticed before. The poor thing reeled, gasped, and died.

"Say, Mr. Ramla, is fightin' chickens good ter eat?"

I felt perfectly outraged at Bill and disgusted with the crackers as a whole. Bob struck Bill a hard blow, and hissed: "You cheated me," between his teeth. He had been cheated by the wily Bill, who, while he held the rooster in his arms, and busied himself making his friend angry, had, unobserved, put the steel spurs on.

Bill had been knocked down, but now arose with little show of anger. There was one good thing about Bill; he kept his temper.

"You'll be sorry fur foolin' 'ith me; I ain't cheated you; nothin' warn't said 'bout steel spurs in the contract fur the rooster fight, an' thar'fore they was 'lowable. What's ter day?" (to the crowd).

"Friday."

"I has you before the jestice ter-morrer," and picking up the dead chicken he walked off.

I felt more like taking the next train for home than returning with Bill. The thought of having to appear

in a justice's court as a witness in a cockfight certainly lessened me much in my own opinion. But more than that, I feared it would prevent my gaining an influence over the crackers.

At nine o'clock the next morning we entered court, which was held in the yard of the justice. Bob was called upon to testify first.

"Bob Smith, you are called upon to testify in your own behalf against Bill Collins for cheating in a rooster fight. Do you solemnly swear upon this Holy Book to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"I do. You see, I wus——"

"Hold on," exclaimed the magistrate; "I'll fine you for contempt of court. I haven't asked you to speak."

"You did. You made me swear that I'd tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but the truth. How you 'spect me ter do 't 'out speakin'? I can't write."

"I expected you to wait until I called on you to speak. Now, relate the whole affair."

"Well, I wus comin' 'long home; I'd been ter town an' had er bucket o' provisions."

Justice: "I don't care what you had."

Bob: "Oh! I thought mebbe you did, you was so powerful pertic'ler 'bout the *whole* truth. Well, I wus walkin' 'long, and I see Bill Collins comin' 'ith that dude chap over yonder, an' he ses, 'Bob, this 's my friend, Mr. ——.' What's yer name, mister?"

Justice: "Never mind that now. Go on."

Bob: "That's what I wus doin' when you stopped me. 'He wants ter see our chickens fight; I'll bring mine down this evening.' Say, chap," addressing me again, "warn't that 'zactly what he sed?"

Justice: "Stop!"

Bob: "Yes; but whin I ses I'll tell the truth I means ter tell it. What did you make me swear fur? I ain't goin' ter swear ter no lie. Now, will you tell me

jes' what you want me ter do?" folding his arms and looking at the justice.

Justice: "Describe the cockfight and the manner of the cheating."

Bob: "Well, you orter er sed that at fust. I kin 'scribe the cockfight, but I dunno the manner o' the cheatin', 'caze I didn't see Bill put the gaffs on, an' I dunno how he done 't. Whyn't you ax him 'bout that?"

Justice: "Because you are testifying now."

Bob: "I's tryin' ter, but you won't lemme. Kin I perceed?"

The justice said nothing.

Bob: "Kin I perceed?"

Justice: "I will give you just ten minutes to tell the whole thing."

Bob: "The roosters fit an' fit an' fit. You kin tell how much by that. They was purty tired by that time, an' that feller what you wouldn't let me ax his name sed, 'Stop, 'twas er shame;' an' Bill wanted ter stop, but his rooster wus on top; I know'd he warn't goin' ter stay thar long; so I wouldn't give up the fight. Thin Bill sed, 'Let 'm rest fur er minit;' an' I let 'm rest. Thin Bill made me so mad that I wanted ter fight, but he sed, 'This ain't er feller fight; this 's er cockfight;' an' thin I sed, 'Let 'm fight, thin;' and Bill's old rooster hit mine 'ith er iron spur, what he hadn't had on 'fore, an' my rooster keeled over an' died. What time is it?"

Justice: "Five minutes gone."

Bob had spoken very rapidly after he had been limited in time. He now drew a long breath.

"Thin I needn't be in sich er hurry 'bout the rest. Arter that rooster died I—jes'—knocked—Bill—Collins blind."

Justice: "Was there any agreement beforehand as to the steel spur?"

Bob: "None 't all. I thought Bill wus goin' ter fight fair."

Justice: "That will do."

The other witnesses on Bob's side were called, and after much haranguing, dismissed.

Bill was then placed on the stand. He took the oath and stood silent. The justice said, "Proceed."

Bill: "Well, I thought I'd wait till you called on me, 'caze I didn't want ter be fined fur speakin'. I's sorter like Bob 'bout that, though—I thought we wus here ter speak."

He then related substantially all that Bob had related, more quietly, however. The justice asked several questions:

"Do you keep chickens for the purpose of fighting?"

Bill: "Naw; I keep er fightin' rooster ter 'com'date Bob. He likes ter fight chickens. I never seed much fun in 't. Reason I put them spurs on yistiddy wus ter stop the fight; 't won't no pleasure ter me."

Justice: "Do you know it is unlawful to keep chickens for fighting and to bet on them?"

Bill: "I sed I didn't keep 'm fur fightin'; I keep 'm ter 'muse my friends. The fightin' causes the 'musement; but that's got nothin' ter do 'ith why I keeps 'm. Naw, an' I don't bet on 'm."

Justice: "Did you not bet on them yesterday?"

Bill: "Naw; Bob wanted ter bet, an' I sed, 'Chaw 'ginst chaw.' He owed me er chaw o' t'bacco, an' I thought 't wus er good way ter git it. But Bob won't satisfied 'ith that; so I sed, 'Chicken 'ginst chicken.' That won't no bettin'; I didn't have er dollar ter stake."

Justice: "Was there anything said about using the steel spurs?"

Bill: "Nothin'; tharfore 't wus right to use 'm."

Justice: "Allow me the right of deciding that."

Bill: "I ain't interferin' 'ith your rights; I's sayin' what I know 's fair."

Justice: "That will do."

I was then called on, and never before or

since have felt so outraged by the world and so indignant with myself. Of all little, low things, to be brought into a justice's court about a chicken fight is the most trying. To this day I abhor the sight of a game fowl. I made a plain, short statement against both Bill and Bob, as the truth in the case necessitated. The justice fined both for betting on fighting chickens.

The boys had no money, and I said:

"Boys, if you will never engage in the low business of fighting chickens again, I will pay for the entire thing."

As we went out I asked the justice how much he made by such practices. The sum he named was a pittance. I thought his chief gain was in the development of patience. No man acquires more of this than a school teacher and a justice-court lawyer in the "backwoods" districts.

When we reached the door Mol met us. She had heard of her lover's trouble, and had come to fight his battle if necessary. The love of woman in every condition is wonderful.

CHAPTER V.

I rested the next day. The enthusiast rests little, but now and then a sober thought of himself comes to him, and he remembers that he is flesh and blood, and not all enthusiasm. The most intense Enthusiast that ever blessed the world took some earnest, tired laborers into the mountains "to rest awhile."

On Pine Log, on that peaceful, quiet day, I saw visions of the new future and of coming human perfection. But we cannot live "in the mountain." The valley is as surely the correlate of the mountain in spiritual life as it is in physical formation.

The day following I took up again the round of visits. Never did matrimony seem a greater blessing and a more natural law than the absence of it caused it to appear that day.

We visited first the home of a bachelor. In a typical cracker cabin we found him at breakfast at ten o'clock in the morning. The sole article of food was blackberries, served in a wooden bucket. After introducing me in his usual manner, Bill opened conversation.

"Say, Mr. Quinn, don't you eat nothin' but blackberries?"

"Oh, yes, I lives as well as enny man whin I ain't got rheumatiz; I ain't been able ter git ter town ter sell berries this week, though; I's stiff whin I gits frum the field; kin hardly git berries these days. How's splinters 'ith you?"

"Very good," answered Bill. "Mr. Quinn, pity you ain't married."

"Married! Ef enny man wants ter insult me jes'

let him talk 'bout gittin' married. Tell you, I wouldn't marry no 'oman on 'arth. Don't say no more 'bout it."

"But, Mr. Quinn, your place's all weeds. Corn'd grow out thar 's well 's jim'son weed, an' ef you don't want ter plow yerself, thar's no reason why the place needn't be cultivate'. You could jes' set here an' smoke an' chaw, an' you could send ter town whin you had rheumatiz, an' have som'thin' fur breakfus' 'sides berries. You dunno how nice it'd be. Better try 't. Here's Miss Janean' Miss Betsy an' Miss Ann nex' door. I's goin' over thar ter-day—might say som'thin' myself ef I didn't have er gal. Want me ter tell 'm you comin'?"

The old man arose with effort, raised his cane, and said:

"Bill Collins, I'll drive you frum my house ef you say 'nother word 'bout marryin'."

Bill laughed heartily. He thoroughly enjoyed making people mad. People who control temper well often delight in such pastime. They play with the world as a cat plays with a helpless mouse.

I was sitting near the door. A snake crawled from under the house, trailed its slimy form across the path and into the weeds, almost as tall as the old man's head. Bill saw it.

"Hu! Mr. Quinn, you lives *on* blackberries and *over* snakes. Don't they pester you powerful?"

"Naw; plenty 'o' blackberries fur 'm ter eat. I don't bother them, an' they don't bother me."

Accustomed to snakes. Wretched state. Along this old man's soul the Serpent had trailed his slime many a day unobserved. What wonder that the outward form of a snake frightened him not?

"Mr. Quinn," I said, "you have a beautiful view from your door." The slopes and shades were beautiful.

"It is purty," he replied. "The days the rheumatiz is bad I sets here and looks, an' somehow the rheu-

matiz gits better. Them things," pointing with feeble finger to all that made the scene lovely, "is better'n medicine."

I was half ashamed of my thought a moment before. Here was a spot where the Serpent had not left his trail.*

Forlorn, desolate, even sad, we left the berry-gatherer. We then followed a narrow path to find another extreme of single life. It was nearly twelve o'clock, and two women were coming from the field, leading two oxen.

"Farm's right here," said Bill. "Riches' folks in this country; them old women's got er bag o' money buried 'round here somewhar now; ef they don't mind, somebody'll find it some o' these days. It won't do ter let 'em know you come ter see 'em; they wouldn't let you come in. I'll manage it, though. Miss Jane, we's 'most broke down, an' 'most starved. This gintl'man's 'bout to faint. Wish you'd let us come in er spell an' rest an' git dinner with you?"

"Can't you git home 'fore dinner? Well, come in, thin. I'll git er bit extra fur you."

She turned the ox into the yard and drew a bucket of water for him and for us, and taking a large knife from the well frame, went into the garden, cut a head of cabbage, and walked into the kitchen. The other sister, after caring for her ox, came in to entertain us. I asked about her crops, and congratulated her upon her skill in farming. She blushed; a woman can always be won by flattery; but I was honest in my praise. Bill was a close observer.

"Miss Betsy, I's going ter be married nex' fall. What d' yer think o' Mol Smith?"

"I think she'll be er plumb goose ef she marries you. I don't b'lieve in marryin', Bill; thar ain't no good in 'it; I gits 'long better'n enny man I know. I

*Some one, I forget who, has said, "There is in every man's soul a spot where the Serpent has not left his slime."

s'ports myself well, but I ain't goin' ter s'port no man."

"That's right, Miss Betsy; I don't b'lieve in wimmen s'portin' men. Moll ain't goin' ter s'port me, but I's goin' ter take keer o' her."

"Well, I never seed er man yit that did. I reckon you'll be like all the rest whin the time fur wuk comes."

"Well, Mol's goin' ter try me ennyhow. Better git married, Miss Betsy. Here's Mr. Quinn right by. He'd enjoy this place powerful, an' he'd love you 's good 's I I love Mol, mebbe; the ole man ain't never done nothin'; take him an' make him wuk; it'd be good fur his rheumatiz."

Miss Betsy arose, took a pistol from the shelf, pointed it at Bill and said:

"No man speaks ter me 'bout ole Sam Quinn."

Bill grew pale and quiet. The pause in the conversation was unpleasant. Then the third sister came. She had been to Pine Log. A basket of stores was on her arm, a knotted handkerchief in her hand; she thrust her handkerchief in her pocket on seeing us, but I heard the dollars clink.

We went to dinner. It had been about half an hour since Miss Jane cut the cabbage. It was smoking on the table now.

"Make er beginnin'," she said; and Bill handed me the cabbage.

I felt obliged to eat it. I had pitied the old bachelor and praised the old maids, but I thought blackberries were better for digestion than half-cooked cabbage.

Immediately after dinner the old maids went to their work, and we were obliged to leave. I thanked them for their kindness and said:

"No traveller need suffer along this road." I ventured to add that I would be in that section some time, and hoped to see them again.

They flushed rather angrily, but were gracious

enough to tell me to call again when tired and hungry. As we went out I heard something fall. It fell from Miss Jane's hair. She did not notice it. I stooped and picked it up. It was a thorn. I looked and saw others in her hair. They made sharp hairpins. I kept the thorn as a memento.

The next day we visited the gold washings. The business of gold washing furnishes a support to a number of people in some sections, though not many in the neighborhood of Pine Log. The gold is principally surface metal. The washers go to the little creek, wade in its shallow water, and scoop the sand up in small vessels. They separate the gold by washing, and carefully place the few grains in goosequills kept for the purpose. They keep up this work until tired—never after that time; then on the banks of the little stream one may see half-a-dozen crackers lounging and lazily sleeping until dinner time. Then they go home with their treasure, eat their scanty meal, and go to the nearest store for needed provisions and tobacco. They do not handle coin at all. Their wealth is in goosequill gold. The storekeeper wraps the provisions and tobacco, and they hand him the quill. He pours out in his hand as much as will pay for the purchases, puts this in a large bottle, and when he has a sufficient number of full bottles he sends them to the mint. We visited one of these washings. The men were busy separating the gold from the dross.

Bill addressed one of them: "Mister Downy, how much gold'll you gimme fur er chaw o' t'bacco? I know you ain't got none, an' it'll save you the trouble o' goin' ter the store."

Mr. Downey stopped, waded to shore, poured out a few grains from his quill, offered them to Bill and asked for the tobacco.

"Law, Mr. Downey, I's jes' foolin' you; I ain't had no t'bacco fur er week. I wanted you ter stop wuk, though, an' come here ter talk ter my friend, Mr. Ramla.

You dunno him, does you? Well, he's the best chap in these diggin's: heap better talk ter him'n wash gold."

Mr. Downey looked as if he did not think so, but came on shore, threw himself on the grass, and said:

"Well, stranger, what yer got ter say? Can't talk here long."

I inquired about the success of his business and he showed me two quills.

"This is how bizness is now."

"How much it that worth?" I asked.

"'Bout ten pounds o' middlin', sack o' flour, and two plugs o' t'bacco."

As I was not fond of middling, did not buy flour by the sack, and did not chew tobacco, his information was not definite.

"Do you work here every day?" I asked.

"Naw; can' 'ford ter wuk ever' day; gits tired, an' thin thar ain't no use in it. Whin pr'visions gits out I comes an' washes 'nough gold ter buy more, an' thin I rests 'till they gives out ag'in. Ain't that the way you wuk? You 'pears ter be restin' now fur er spell. You mus' have lots o' pr'visions."

I told him I was afraid my larder was not full, but that I hoped my family was not suffering, and that my visit in that section was not entirely for rest. I asked if he had children. He had two sons and five daughters. I asked if they went to school.

"Naw; ain't goin' neither. Boys got ter go ter washin' gold soon 's they're big enough, an' gals is got ter plow an' hoe. Can't 'ford ter fool 'way no time; ain't no use 'n goin' ter school. I never been ter school, an' I gits 'long 's well as enny man in these parts. You tryin' ter git er school?"

I told him no.

Bill exclaimed at this: "Mr. Ramla, you's fooled me; I thought that wus jes' what you wus arter."

I told him that he should know soon what I was after. Mr. Downey called Bill aside, and I overheard him say:

"Bill, you better let that feller alone; he'll fool you worse'n that."

"I don't know why he's goin' ter fool me," Bill answered; "I ain't got no money, an' I ain't done him no harm."

"Mark my word," Mr. Downey said, with emphasis and an air of superior knowledge of human nature; "I know's folks."

"I knows 'm too," answered Bill.

I wondered if I had made a mistake in asking Mr. Downey about his children's education. Apparently I had. But the subject had to be broached some time, and I thought the manner in which Mr. Downey took the matter was perhaps not so discouraging after all. I had expected opposition.

Mr. Downey returned and said: "Mornin', stranger; I can't waste no more time. Bill, don't never stop me in my work ag'in unless you're on important bizness."

We bade Mr. Downey good morning and left for home.

"Thinks he's so powerful smart," said Bill; "wanted me not ter go 'ith you; he ain't got no knowledge o' folks; nobody thinks so but him."

I told Bill that time would prove all men.

Weary in mind, if not in body, I went that night upon the mountain. Once before I had seen a strange object when I had taken a night stroll there. It was again visible, and though I am not afraid of ghosts or phantoms, this apparition disturbed me. In thought alone, however; it never came near in person. It stood leaning against a tree some distance from me, but when it saw that I had observed it, quietly walked off, and I watched it out of sight.

CHAPTER VI.

Courtship is everywhere interesting, not less so among the crackers than elsewhere. Different as classes may claim to be, unlike as individuals may appear, opposite as characteristics may seem, the discrepancy is in method alone. Human nature is human everywhere. The heart has its cravings, and they differ in different beings only in the means of gratification.

The courtship of the cracker is not long. A week sometimes is the extent of it, a summer season the usual time; and rarely do a young man's addresses continue longer than a year. The girls are like girls in other circles, some of them too easily pleased; but if, perchance, a young man finds one who exacts much, he makes no effort to meet her demands, but comforts himself with the thought of the large number who make no demands. Perhaps by the next Sunday he is married, while the young woman may never marry. Some women are old maids from necessity, no doubt; but some are old maids because their lovers fail to measure to a high standard of manhood. Blessings on such old maids!

Courtship and marriage, short and without love, is not peculiar to the crackers. It is common because meeting the needs of common hearts. I have seen many cases of it, and wish I had been satisfied with the first sight. But I have watched the two lives as they have gone on even to the brink of eternity without knowledge of a better way.

My friend at Walesca had described the ordinary cracker courtship and marriage to me. I remember one or two cases he mentioned. He was talking to a young man about his prospects in life. The young man had

been in school a short time, and my friend was hopeful of him. "Well, I's quit school: can't come no longer. I 'spects ter git married 'n bout er week an' settle down ter housekeepin'." My friend asked whom he was to marry. "Donno yit; goin' ter see ter-day; want ter 'gage you ter tie us up, though; 'spect it 'll be nex' Sunday." "What!" said my friend, "marry next Sunday, and do not know whom you are to marry? My friend, there are many things to be considered before marriage. First, are you able to take care of a wife? Second, are you really in love with a certain young woman? and is that young woman in love with you? There are a thousand other things to be thought of, but these are the most necessary." My friend was not a married man. "How do you know? You ain't married. 'Spects I's got 'bout 's much right ter marry as you has ter keep single. Ef I finds er gal ter day I'll write you, an' you be prepared ter marry us within er week."

The next day the following characteristic note reached my friend:

"Found er gal; be ready fur us nex' Sunday."

All day Sunday my friend expected the couple to come, but they failed to appear. Just at dusk one of the schoolboys told him that the young man was in the road a short distance from his house, and wished to see him. He sent the cracker word to come to him, but the boy refused, and my friend went to see what he wanted. Barefooted, and in his usual crackerish dress, he stood in the middle of the road, anxiously waiting.

"Is this here the way you keep yer 'gagements? Pity the gal you marries ef you don't come ter time no better'n you does ter marry other folks. Won't 'gage you no more."

"Where is the young woman?" was asked.

"She's over thar in the bushes. Wouldn't do fur us ter stand here together, 'caze folks passin' 'long might 'spect what's the matter an' stop ter see the job well did. It kin be well 'nough did without nobody

lookin.' I don't want nobody, an' Becky don't neither. Come along, Becky."

The young girl, with flat bonnet, blue calico dress, and bare feet, emerged from the bushes. The minister tried to persuade them to go to his house, but they stubbornly refused. He told them witnesses were necessary, and with some difficulty succeeded in persuading them to allow him to go for two of the schoolboys. They were married, and both bride and groom thanked him for his services. The boy said:

"I know'd Becky 'd thank you. She thanked me when I axed her. I know'd I warn't going ter have no trouble. She wus the fust gal I axed, an' she had me. But, say, thankin' ain't 'nough fur you. I owes you er bushel o' taters fur tuition now. Whin I pays you, I'll put in er gallon more fur the marriage. Becky, does you think you's worth er gallon o' 'taters an' er dollar and er half fur license, too?"

He looked doubtful, and they walked off man and wife.

My friend sighed when he told me of this. It was pitiful to him. Another instance I remember: in this case he persuaded the couple to be married in church. Great preparations were made. People assembled from a distance. The night was warm, the windows of the church were open, and a puff of wind blew the lights out just as the ceremony was nearly over and the minister about to say, "I pronounce you man and wife." When the lights were burning again, the would-be bride and groom were not to be found. The minister, almost angry, after his effort to make this a respectable marriage, sent a messenger after the couple to say that they were not married. They returned. The man said it was the last time he would be married in church. When the ceremony was entirely over, he asked: "Is we married now? Well, come on, Polly; don't reckin they'll send fur us this time;" and they hurried to the "in'fair."

It is common for the cracker to marry so. The young man buys ten cents' worth of candy on Saturday, gets on an old gray mule on Sunday, rides over to see the girl, and spends the day. They talk the matter over, and under such circumstances love is so sweet that they decide to marry; and what is the use waiting?—far better consummate the affair at once. So the wedding takes place the next Sunday, and the married life is such as I have described in Bill's home. Each generation follows the example of the preceding, and so life passes.

But I have to tell you of another courtship among the crackers as it was told me. The world records not many such cases in its annals—the life of a man whose locks have grown white with the silver light of love. Though I am told he was not old when he related to me his story, I do not tell you that, for love ages sometimes more than years, and men's steps grow unsteady and their voices crack because their hearts beat too heavily.

Bill and I were walking on Pine Log one afternoon just before sunset; I saw for the first time a grave, and over it, looking sadly down, an old, gray-haired man. His head was bare, and the gray locks were hardly heavy enough to protect it. I turned in reverence from the sacredness of another's grief. We were tired though, and Bill proposed to stop. He spoke to the old man, more respectfully than I had heard him speak except to me. We sat down on the moss-covered rocks; the old man sat down too.

"I comes here ever' evenin', stranger; I's come fur twenty year. The snow is sometimes so deep that I have ter wuk fur er long time ter uncover the grave; but I never leaves it covered at night, unless 't is 'ith flowers. The dry leaves fall the last o' the year, and the mountain 's covered, but the grave 's not. The wind sighs 'round it; I can't help that. The rain falls; I can't help that; but nothin' else shan't disturb her rest."

I wondered that he did not put on his hat. He saw that I wondered and said:

"I never put it on here, stranger; you see, 't wouldn't be respectful-like ter her. She wus er good gal. Did you never hear her story?" and he looked reproachfully at Bill.

"No, I never told him, Mr. Brown; it seemed so sad-like."

"Yes, it does seem sad ter me. You see, stranger, 't wus this way: She wus er purty child, shinin' blue eyes an' yaller hair; it looked like gold whin the washers quills 't; face so white it looked fur all the world like a lily what grows on the water under the shade o' the willer trees; her cheeks full an' round an' pink, lookin' like er bunch o' blooms in the orchid; an' whin I told her so, she turned her head like er fairy and looked so tickled kinder, an' show'd teeth whiter'n the snow. An' I loved her, stranger, from the time she wus er leetle gal till now, an' I loves her more now 'n I did thin. I wus out gittin' splinters wun day whin I wus 'bout ten years old. (I used ter be er splinter boy, an' she used ter come ter pick up the splinters whin her mother'd let her, an' she'd want ter carry some ter town an' sell 'm, too, an' she'd get mad 'caze I wouldn't let her, but I'd allus give her er penny er two fur her help.) That day I told her, 'May, does you know that me an' you'll be grown 'fore long?' And she nodded her head; an' thin I sed, 'Don't you think that you an' me better git married thin, May, 'caze I love you!' An' she nodded her head ag'in; an' I sed, 'May, why don't you speak? Don't you love me?' But she jes' nodded her head ag'in, an', as ef ashamed o' that, run off in the woods; an' I followed her, an' I got her ter talk 'bout what we wus goin' ter do. The nex' day I went ter town, an' whin I come back May wus settin' here on this rock waitin fur me. I looked up, 'caze somehow it seemed brighter, an' I saw her. She smiled such a happy smile it seemed like er angel hidin' 'round the bushes. 'May,' I sed,

'take this; don't you never lose it; it means that I's goin' ter do all I told you yestiddy.' It wus er leetle ring that I got out'n er prize box; an' thin she handed me er leetle paper. It wus wrapped 'round er t'bacco bag she'd made out'n blue flannel, but she sed. 'I don't give it ter you ter use, 'caze I don't wan't you ter smoke; jes' keep it.' An' I's kept it, stranger," he said, showing me the little bag, carefully wrapped. He took it from near his heart. "And she kept the leetle ring; we buried it 'ith her. So we wus fotechd up t'gether. We tried ter prepare ter marry 'fore we did. I had built er leetle frame house, an' she had made her quilts, an' ever'thing wus ready, an' we wus goin' ter marry the nex' Wednesday. She was down 't the wash-place washin' clothes, an' I come by ter tell her somethin'. That's the sweetes' talk I ever had 'ith her; an' I kissed her, 'caze it wus so near the time, you know, an' started 'cross the creek on er leetle log. The log wurn't very steddly, an' I turned 'round ter kiss my hand ter her, an' she laughed so sweet, an' her cheeks bloomed more, an' thin I fell. Thar'd jes' been er rain, an' the creek wus high, an' I couldn't swim. She know'd it, an' she screamed so loud it frightened me fur her ter be frightened, an' thin I tried ter swim, an' I sunk. She jumped in while I wus under the water; I hadn't thought o' her doing it, an' thin I jes' riz in time to see her sink. Some men come an' took me out, but her clothes wus heavy, an' kept her down too long. They brought us ter the bank an' laid us on the green grass. I wus strong 'nough ter rally soon, but May never wus strong, an' she jes' opened her eyes wunst, tried ter smile, an' sed, 'Jack, I love you; be er good man.' An' I have tried ter be good, stranger; I have, indeed. We buried her here, 'caze I know'd she'd want ter be buried here, whar I found her waitin' that day, now thirty year ago, an' I try ter keep her grave as fresh as she used ter look. After we put her away, I went ter her mother. She

wus the onliest leetle one, jes' like Bill's sweetheart is now, an' I tuk her mother ter the leetle frame house, an' she's been thar ever sence, an' whin she's able she comes here, too. We of'n talk o' leetle May, an' wonder ef she knows. Stranger, I b'lieve she does."

I put my arm around the old man as tenderly as I could, raised the other hand and asked the Great-Sympathizer's benediction. Somehow my voice was not clear, and I was glad the Master hears in the heart. The old man shook with emotion, as he had not done before, and waved us to leave him. We walked off, and when we had reached the foot of the hill I looked back. The figure was near the grave; but it was kneeling now.

I told Bill to go home, that I would stay out a while longer. I walked up and down the road perturbed in spirit. I looked once more up to the spot where we left the old man. He was gone. Just where we had sat stood the strange white figure that had caused me uneasiness before. Its head could not be seen. It wore a white hood.

I walked toward Bill's home; this unusual phenomenon on the mountain alarmed me. I heard the report of a pistol; a bullet fell just in front of me. Bill heard it and ran to meet me. I did not care to tell him of the apparition, for fear he would not go with me to many places I had yet to visit. So I said:

"Someone must be hunting on the mountain."

"Hu! don't hunt nothin' but folks 'ith er pistol."

When we reached the house I found a note from my friend awaiting me:

"Come to-night; I need you."

I saddled my horse, and went five miles across the mountain to Walesca that night.

CHAPTER VII.

I found my friend troubled.

"I have hard work for you," he said. "We must stop the liquor traffic here. There is no hope for the crackers until it is stopped. These still-men and 'grocery' men ruin the school. They come here, hide out in the woods, and the schoolboys buy whiskey from them. To-day I found two young men drunk, and half-a-dozen bottles behind old stumps. I shall have to give up the school and not make another effort in this mountain section, unless something is done immediately."

He was despondent, and I did not wonder; how hopeless the work seemed! I tried to encourage him, but he knew more than I did, and had stood more.

"You must visit the blind stills as soon as possible. Bill knows where they are, and if you have gained his confidence, he will take you to some of them. Win the esteem and affection of the distillers. Do not let them know that you know they are moonshiners. Persuade them to come to church, and it may be that we can gradually break up the traffic. I will try to interest the government more. I have just written to a revenue officer to come at once. Old friend, I hate to put the hardest part of the work upon you."

I thought he had the hardest part to stay quietly in the schoolroom and labor day by day in the same way; my work was at least exciting. But the labors of both seemed slow to accomplish results. Our hopes were like the hopes of the stream that in time only can wear the rocks away.

I returned that night. The next morning I asked Bill about the still-keepers. He at first refused to give

me any information; but finally consented to take me to the home of one of them. We went that day about three miles from his house, through the woods and by by-paths to a little hut.

Just before we reached it Bill said:

"Now, yonder's the still, but don't 'pear ter see it, 'caze Nicely may be thar, an' ef he sees us looking our heads won't be worth no more'n the powder an' shot it'd take ter blow 'm off. He don't know I know he's got er still, or he'd think nothin' o' buryin' me in er ditch down here. They don't run the still in the day, but thar's giner'ly somebody 'round ter watch fur the revenue men."

We were in hunting dress, and by way of precaution had killed some birds on the way. The distiller was sitting in front of his door, smoking. His wife was in the garden working.

"That looks nat'ral-like," said Bill; "reminds me o' dad."

Nicely arose to meet us. I saw he looked uneasy, though he tried to appear very composed. A gun was by his side. Bill told him we had been hunting, and if he would allow us, we would like to take dinner with him. He had just been hunting, too, he said, but we saw no sign of game. Bill told me afterwards that Nicely always carried a gun, and that on his return from the still in the early morning he would kill a rabbit or partridge, so as to deceive visitors as to the hunt. I noticed he kept his hand on the gun all the time, apparently unconsciously leaning on it. I was afraid not to do the same at first, but when we went in to dinner I put my gun down, determined to show him that I had no hostile intentions. He had cleared the land well, and a fine crop evidenced his prosperity. I congratulated him upon this crop. He looked suspicious, but said:

"Yes, the crop's fine this year; I raise 'nough corn fur use an' er bushel or two ter sell. It's not as much trouble ter wuk as cotton, an' grows better here. I

have er big orchid back here, too, (pointing back of the house), an' we live purty well on the profit o' corn an' fruit an' on the game I kill."

This was doubtless true, as distilling corn and fruit is a money-making business. I asked him where he sold his crops. He answered in Atlanta. Many of the farmers of that section carry their crops and small barter forty miles to Atlanta. I asked him if he worked his farm alone.

"Naw; Belle an' my son Jim does mos' o' the work. I oversees the bizness."

Jim, I supposed, was then at the still. He inquired who I was, where I lived, and what was my business in that section.

Bill said: "Law, Mr. Nicely, didn't I introduce you? 'Scuse me; I was so tired I clear forgot it."

He then introduced me, mispronouncing my name, and continued:

"He's from the city, an' he's been huntin' an' fishin'; he's been stayin' 'ith me fur the las' two months."

We left soon after dinner, and as we walked off Bill said to me:

"We'll have ter hunt like good fellows now, an' don't you say er word 'bout the still. Jes' talk 'bout how nice Mr. Nicely is, an' what er good farmer."

We hunted in earnest, and I enjoyed the sport. I looked back once, and saw the still-keeper stealthily following us. Bent double, with gun lowered he was creeping through the bushes. We hunted all the way home, and all the way the moonshiner followed us. I saw him not twenty yards from Bill's door when we entered it.

I thanked Bill for his admirable guardianship through the perils of the day, and asked him if he would risk as much again; that I must visit the homes of other still-keepers, and, if possible, a still itself.

"'Twon't do ter go no more fur er month now.

Give 'm time ter find out all about you, an' that you ain't er revenue man."

During the next month I continued my visits through the neighborhood, making friends where I could and clinching the friendship by some slight kindness. I met Nicely more than once. I was glad to meet him, hoping to make an impression for good upon him, though I was confident he was following me for no good purpose. Truly, a life of sin is an unhappy life. Men become suspicious, and every movement is nervous and uneasy.

I went on the mountain many times in spite of the apparition there. I saw it often, but it never sought to disturb me or seemed hostile after that one shot on the day that the old man told his story. I wondered if it was a moonshiner. I began to think again of visiting the moonshiners, and I determined to go to a still, that I might learn all about the life of these people.

Bill said: "All right; we'll go 'possum huntin' to-night, and go by Plunket's still, 'bout four miles from here. You'd better carry er pistol an' plenty o' cartridges, an' ef they gits arter us an' we have ter run, no matter 'bout gittin' separated, jes' go fur home 's fas' 's you kin; but hide somewhar near; don't go ter the house 'fore day, or they'll git you sure."

We started about eleven o'clock, caught an opossum, which Bill carried, and then went to the still. The moonshiners were at work, and there seemed to be many of them. Evidently their work that night was something besides distilling. They seemed to be holding a conference. We heard many voices in subdued tones, discussing the probability of the revenue officer's coming in a day or two. They had heard in some way that he was coming. The oaths were fearful. I have never anywhere else heard such.

"Bill, this is dreadful."

"Hush!" he said, "they're talkin' 'bout you."

"I believe this man that's pokin' 'round the country here 'ith Bill Collins 's er revenue man; looks like one."

"I think so, too; an' I think we'd better git rid of him."

"Be quiet fur yer life," said Bill to me.

Then came a familiar voice from the still. Nicely spoke:

"Well, you fellers, I guess, don't know 's much 'bout that man 's I do. He came ter my house 'ith Bill Collins 'bout er month ago, an' I thought fur certain he wuz er revenue man. I followed him home that day, an' I've watched him ever sence; met him all 'round the neighborhood, an' he ain't no revenue man; I know he ain't. I dunno what he's here fur. He says 'tis ter hunt, but I think 'tis ter do good. I ain't seed him do nothin' else. He nurses sick folks, an' gives money ter poor folks, an' sech 's that. He's er likely feller ter talk ter too. I wish he'd come ter see me ag'in."

It was the first time I was ever grateful for flattery.

"Well, we'll let him alone, ef you say so," some one replied.

"I think you'd better," replied Nicely.

Then, as near as we could gather, they seemed to be planning to take the officer's life. When the conference seemed about to close, we left as quietly as we had come. I had not been in the still, and though my perilous visit may have seemed useless, I learned more of the desperate life of the moonshiner that night than I could have learned in a lifetime without it. The very perils I passed through impressed me more than any surmise could have done with the depravity and desperation of these people; a highway robber is not more desperate than a moonshiner.

We reached home just as the gray sky presaged the morning. We had not left the still too soon, for the moonshiners' voices were heard not far behind us. I threw myself in my hammock and fell asleep, despite the excitement of the night.

The revenue officer was coming that day, my friend told me when I went to Walesca. I stayed and told the officer of his danger.

"Thank you," he said, and laughed; "I am used to the plots of the moonshiners. Three times before my life has been plotted against, and it is always in danger. Your information will be very helpful to me, however."

He telegraphed immediately for three other officers to come and accompany him on his visit to the stills.

I said: "If possible, have no trouble with the moonshiner, Nicely;" and he promised as much clemency as the law allowed.

The other officers came, and the four started out together. I felt anxious all day and stayed with my friend awaiting the men who possibly never would return. Just at morning on the next day, two days from the time I had visited the still, they came. One was wounded, and stayed with us; the other three went to Atlanta with five moonshiners as prisoners. Another moonshiner had been badly wounded but had escaped. One had been killed. Nicely had escaped unhurt.

CHAPTER VIII.

I questioned the wounded officer as to their experience, and he related it as follows :

"We reached the section of the stills about ten o'clock last night. Every still was deserted. We went to the homes of the moonshiners, but no one but their wives and children were there, and we rode from the last place without having seen a moonshiner. Riding towards Cartersville, where we had decided to stay until the next night, and then surprise the distillers, we heard voices in the woods to the right of the road. The thought immediately came to me that they had expected us to come from Cartersville, and intended waylaying us before we could reach the stills. We had, however, come the other way from Walesca. We listened a moment. One man said: "The revenue men won't git here ter-night. Let's rest er bit and go home. We'll try 'm on the Warlesky road ter-morrow night. Guess they'll be thar by thin." We waited a few minutes, and then surprised them. Riding quickly up, we put handcuffs on two before any of them awoke. There were eight in the party. They fought like tigers when awakened, and we did too. We killed one. With an oath he said, in dying: 'We intended ter kill you ter-night.' Then the firing became desperate. Two men ran. We wounded one of them, but could not follow. He made good his escape. They missed fire at every shot except the one that wounded me. I manacled one while he was loading his pistol. One of my companions did another the same way. The ammunition of the remaining three gave out, and they started to run, but we took them all. One of the moon-

shiners who escaped was Nicely, the other was the desperado of the mountains, McCabe. They saw that we must overpower them by force of arms, though they outnumbered us. McCabe ran, and I shot him. He stopped, and above the firing and the storm of curses, I heard him swear that with the same bullet that I had wounded him he would kill me. The two moonshiners whom we first manacled of course fled, but they were helpless, and were easily retaken. They were brought in this morning. As we came to Walesca to-day I saw posted on a tree this notice: 'I have tuk out the ball. Some day it will cost the revenue officer who shot me, his life.—McCabe.' He was then in the mountains, past arrest. There is scarcely an officer in the state who will attempt to take him. He has killed two revenue men already.'

I was told afterwards that this man was the best and the bravest revenue officer in the state, and really the only one that would attack McCabe.

I asked him what would be done with the moonshiners who were taken to Atlanta. He replied that men who run blind stills are usually only fined, but that these would be tried for attempt to murder revenue officers. I asked if I would have to testify as to the plot. I really had only heard enough to know that some kind of a plot was on foot. My information could not be positive. He answered that he supposed I would have to appear at any rate. I was disheartened at the prospect of my hope of helping the cracker being entirely dissipated. I told the officer that I would not evade the summons of the law, but that if I should be subpoenaed to appear in court to testify as to the plot, it would certainly destroy the little influence I then had with the crackers, and interfere materially with the efforts and influence of my friend's school, and possibly cost my life. He said that, if there should be sufficient evidence without mine, he would ask that I be relieved from testifying.

As soon as he was well enough to return to Atlanta the case was called, and Bill Collins and I were subpoenaed as witnesses. We went, of course, but the revenue officer had arranged to have us examined privately at a conference of lawyers first: and this conference, in consideration of there being sufficient evidence without ours, and out of respect for the cause I was laboring in and the aid that Christian work in the section of the stills would be to the United States, excused us. We returned without the moonshiners having any knowledge of our having been summoned.

The case was tried, the verdict was guilty.

Some years afterward my friend was sent for to see Nicely die. He repented at the last, and said he would be willing to meet the fate of his fellows if he should live to give himself up to justice, but he died at home, repentant, and my friend hoped, saved. It is one of the sweetest thoughts of my life that he said at the last that the watch he kept over me for so long had been a blessing to him. Nicely's widow lives with her son at the same place where Bill and I found them. The corn and the fruit yet testify to their prosperity, but the distillery no longer stands.

The morning after our visit to the stills, Bill's sweetheart came to his home. She had seen us and the moonshiners pass, and suspected where we had been. Mol came to the door, called Bill out, and I heard her say:

"Look here, Bill Collins, ef you 'spects ter marry me, I want yer to stop goin' whar you'll git murdered. I don't want no moonshiners comin' 'round an' swingin' my sweetheart up ter er tree. I know jes' whar you wus las' night. You dares too much now, an' that man what's takin' you 'round the country 's got no bizness takin' you in dang'rous places. He ain't goin' ter keep nobody from killin' you. What ef he did buy er corfin fur yer dad? He may buy wun fur you, too; but you won't 'preciate it much then."

"No, Mol, I'll 'preciate it now, 'case I know he'll do that or ennythin' else fur me, an' I'll do ennythin' fur him. You dunno what you're talkin' 'bout. We went 'possum huntin' last night. You see this?" showing her the opossum which we had really brought home. "I caught him; bring you er piece ter-day. And you thought I went ter er blind still? You know I don't drink, Mol. What makes you think I went thar?"

"'Caze I seed you pass this mornin' 'fore day, an' right arter you passed I seed half-er-dozen moonshiners come stragglin' 'long. They had bags, too, jes' like they'd been 'possum huntin'. I b'lieve you did go."

"Then, mebbe you thinks I keep's er still. Say, Mol, ef you wus ter see me pass along ter-morrow mornin' 'bout day, an' in about half er hour you wus ter see er cyclone breezin' by, would you think I'd been ter the beginnin' o' that cyclone?"

"Naw, Bill, you know I'se got sense."

"Jes' as much reason in your b'lieven' that 's I went ter the still. You got sense 'bout ever'thin' but me. Say, Mol, is you goin' ter be that way when we's married?"

She burst into tears. "Bill, you knows I wus jes' lookin' out fur yer safety."

"I knows it, Mol, an' I knows you's the bes' gal in the world. Now, don't cry. I'll say you've got more sense 'bout me 'n ennythin' else ef you won't cry. Mol, you know I loves you, and that's better'n all my teasin'. Forgive me, Mol, an' I won't fret you no more."

I was in my hammock; Mol's coming had awakened me, and I had to lie still to keep from disturbing them. Bill, in all he said, had not revealed the fact that he had really been to the still. He thought it best not to reveal it. Women tell everything to their sweethearts; men seldom tell dangerous facts to any one, even to their wives; but then men are not burdened with dangerous knowledge as women are, and it is no relief to them to tell it. They believe that it is best for them not to tell.

Men tell their troubles only to obtain help. Women tell theirs to receive sympathy. And then there is a feeling with a woman that she is sacredly bound to tell her sweetheart everything. Is it that she feels the sacredness of an engagement more than a man? However it be, Bill was wise in telling no one of our going to the still. He had really not neglected Mol, but he had not gone to see her as often lately as she possibly expected him. I felt partly responsible for this; he had been with me a great deal, and I did not want the girl to feel that I had taken her beau from her. So after I heard Bill say: "Mol, I'd go home with you, but I's goin' ter bring you some 'possum fur dinner, an' your mother won't lemme come twice in one day," I arose, followed her rapidly, and went home with her myself.

"Miss Mollie," I said, "you must not think that I am keeping Bill with me too much. He is helping me in a great work, that I will tell you of soon." I asked her pardon for saying that I thought Bill loved her very tenderly.

She seemed to appreciate my thought of her, and my conscience felt relieved.

"Oh! Mr. Ramla," she said, "I bet Bill's clear forgot ter tell you that er man come here the other night an' axed mam an' me 'bout you, an' what you wus here fur. He wouldn't come in, though, an' I didn't know who he was; he 'peared mighty interested an' I don't 'spect he meant you no good."

I asked his height. He was very tall. The apparition was also very tall. Was this incubus to oppress me always?

I took my usual walks on the mountain, and seldom went without seeing it. I wondered if it could be the desperado, McCabe. I spoke to my friend about it. He only laughed and said a man who would visit a blind still should not be afraid of ghosts.

"You are tired," he said, "and gloomy when you go on the mountain, and the shadows mingle with your

gloomy thoughts, and form strange images. It is the ghost of the day's difficulties and discouragements."

"But the pistol shot?" I said.

"Some one shooting at a mark."

"Then the mark was very near me."

"Or," he added, "some cracker boy trying to frighten you. The crackers delight in such sport, without meaning the least real harm. They are happy when they can make some one else uncomfortable. It is a species of conceit; they are gratified when they are the means of accomplishing anything that is not actually wrong."

I knew this was true, and felt better satisfied about the appearance on the mountain. But what of the man I had seen several times following me? I had never been able to see his face. He never came near enough.

"Once since McCabe fled I have seen this strange man following me," I said.

"Then it is not McCabe," said my friend. "He would be afraid to appear anywhere in this country;" and he changed the subject.

I thought my friend was a little disgusted with me, but I found later that he was very anxious about my safety, but wisely tried to reassure me.

CHAPTER IX.

One Saturday when I was thoroughly worn out with work and worry, I told Bill that I would go to Walesca to spend the day.

He said: "I'm glad you don't want ter go nowhar else; thar's 'zactly whar I wants ter go. Ain't been ter Warlesky in er long time on Sat'day, an' I's goin' ter have er good time thar in the store this day."

I asked what would constitute the good time.

"Oh, jes' foolin' the store people and the boys 'round thar. Them schoolboys thinks I'm the greates' man in these parts. I can't say so much fur them. They ain't got much sense. Say, you jes' come in the store ter-day an' see me down 'm."

I told him that I was not well, and thought I had better rest.

"Ain't laughin' 's good 's res'? You'd laugh 'til you'd furgit you was tired."

We went, I to my friend's house, and Bill to the store. My friend was not at home, so after a half hour's rest I went to the store to be refreshed by the cracker wit. The merry laughter of the schoolboys could be heard some time before I reached the store. Lounging about the town was a great fault with them for a long while; it was impossible to make strict laws in the school in its first years.

When I went into the store Bill was sitting on a goods box, and the boys were congregated around him in every shape in which merriment seeks expression. He folded his arms as I entered, straightened himself, and was perfectly silent. The boys tried to get him to speak. He would not say a word. They insisted upon knowing the reason of his sudden silence.

“ ‘Caze I’s got r’spect fur folk’s feelin’s. Mr. Ramla tole me jes’ ’fore we come that he didn’t want ter hear no laughin’; he wanted ter rest ter-day. I thought laughin’ ’d be the same ’s res’, but he didn’t think so, so I considers his feelin’s. Y’awl ain’t got no ’sid’ration fur folks.’ ”

I told him not to let my presence interfere with their pleasure, that I should not stay long.

“All right; I’ll perceed. B’lieve I wus tellin’ you ’bout my fust courtship. Well, I wanted ter go ter see the gal; she’d done sent me word fifty times ter come. So I sold splinters an’ bought pep’mint candy ter take ter her, an’ rid my donkey over thar ’bout five miles. The gal didn’t know I wus comin’, so she warn’t ready fur me. She was in the garden; I seed her fly ’round the house in her old ragged skirt; her hair wus tangled an’ I dunno how she ever got it loose; but arter er while she come out in er red calico frock, blue ribbons a streamin’, an’ her hair flowin’ ’round like high water, kinder unsettled like, an’ standin’ out like er haystack arter the wind’s done twisted it ’round. ‘I’s so glad ter see you, Mr. Collins’ (I won’t more’n ’bout fourteen;) ‘I’s looked fur you all this summer. I’s sorry you couldn’t git here sooner.’ I told her I’d been tryin’ ter come harder’n than I tried ter trade donkeys when I had wun that wouldn’t wuk. It warn’t so; I never tried ’t all; come jes’ ’s soon ’s I wanted ter. ‘Oh! I’s so glad you thinks so much o’ me. I allus liked you, Mr. Collins. I said ter mam jes’ the other day, ‘Bill Collins ’s the bestest boy in these parts.’ ” I know’d that b’fore, an’ she thought she wus tellin’ me er powerful piece o’ news. ‘Thin I ses ter mam, too, “Mam, he’d make er good husband.” Thin mam sed, “Ax him over.” I’s so glad you’s come, Mr. Bill.’ ”

“I suppose you gave her the peppermint candy about that time?” said one of the boys.

“Naw, sir; couldn’t ’ford ter waste pep’mint candy; cost too meny splinters—’bout two splinters er stick.

That gal wus too anxious. Did you ever go in the orchid arter apples, an' hear 'm drap, drap, an' think you warn't a-goin' ter have the trouble ter shake the tree? Jes' pick up wun, an' you'll git fooled. The apple what ain't strong 'nough ter stay on the tree till you shake it, ain't the apple fur me. Same way with gals. But I thought I'd have er leetle fun ennyhow, bein' 's how I'd come so fur. You know thar's er big oak tree down here er piece what the lightnin' struck an' knocked in ten hundred pieces. I wish it had er been pine; it 'd made fine splinters fur me. Well, I tole that gal how I loved her harder 'n the lightnin' struck that tree, an' she sed, 'Why, darlin' Bill, how you do talk. How would you prove that?' I proved it in the usual way, an' she said, 'The tree certainly must 'a felt comfort'ble like whin the lightning struck it.'"

A peal of laughter here drowned every other sound. Bill did not even smile, but he spoke to the storekeeper and quietly sprinkled something out of a small jar on the counter.

"Well, Bill," the boys began, "tell us about your next courtship."

"Oh, yes; it wus that same day. I lef' soon arter dinner, an' tole that gal I'd come the next Sunday an' we'd fix the day. I went like I tole her, an' jes' rid up ter the gate an' called her out an' I sed, 'Now, you know we must agree on the day, can't marry 'less both parties is agreed as ter the time. The only time that'll suit me is the day arter my third wife dies; couldn't be no sooner 'n that, 'caze the other gals would object.' Thin I rode off fast ter keep her frum throwin' er brick at me, an' called back, 'Does that suit you?' I didn't hear what she sed. Well, the same evenin' what I promised that gal ter come back an' name the day I went ter see 'nother wun. Warn't nobody at home but her. She wus sorter shy-like, an' I thought she wus the gal. I felt in my pocket fur the candy, but somehow it didn't feel right. I tuk it out, an' it had broke

into half-inch pieces, knocking 'ginst the saddle; an' like it wus 'shamed o' breakin', it had all tried ter git t'gether ag'in, an' wus jes' er big cake. But she sed 'twas nice. Well, I waited fur her ter interduce the subject, but she wouldn't do it. So I tole her how I'd allus loved her, loved her harder'n er cyclone kin blow; but she didn't like that kind of love, 'case er cyclone blow'd her home 'way wunst. So I sed, 'Well, I love you better'n you loves the arbutis what blooms along the mountain, an' lies so close ter the ground that the cyclone can't tech it—jes' blows over it.' An' she 'lowed how she reckin'd that warn't true, an' I made her b'lieve 'twus, an' she sed she liked that kind o' love, but she'd have ter ax her mam. I left purty happy, an' thought I'd come ag'in; an' so I did, but 'twas arter I'd forgot ter love her enny more; you see, I seed 'nother gal I liked better. She wus standin' on the porch, an' her mam had come home, an' she jes' tickled me on the cheek, an' she sed, 'Bill, dear, does you love me 's much 's you did? Mam's ses she's willin';' an' I sed, 'Naw, I don't love you er bit now,' an' I ain't never been thar sence. But somehow that gal wus nice."

"Tell us another experience, Bill," said one of the boys.

"Ain't you never courted no gals yerself? Don't you know how 'tis? I'll take you ter see er gal some Sunday. But naw; Mol 'd think I wus goin' ter see her myself; can't do that."

"Take us to see Mol," they exclaimed.

Bill pulled off his coat and picked up a crowbar that was near. "Miss Smith's her name; you call her by it."

"But you called her Mol. We didn't know she had any other name."

"Thin why didn't you ax me? I calls her Mol 'caze she's my sweetheart. I ain't goin' ter tell you but wun more, 'caze you needn't 'spect me ter entertain you all the time. I went ter see another gal. She was mighty

dignified, an' she wus er 'ligious gal. I axed her to marry me; she sed she'd go out an' think 'bout it er while. She stayed out 'bout er hour, 'an thin she come in; she'd been goin' ter er school over here, an' she could read purty fair. She had the Bible in her hand, an' she p'inted ter er place fur me ter read. I tole her the room wus dark an' my eyes won't very well, an' she'd better read it, an' she sed she 'lowed how she'd open the Bible an' whatever she saw furst wus goin' ter be her answer; an' whin she opened it she saw: 'An' it came to pass,' an' that was her answer. I axed her what made her stay so long, 'an she sed she thought mebbe wunst wouldn't do, so she kep' openin' the Bible, an' ter keep from losin' her place, she kep' her finger 'tween the leaves, an' no matter whar else she'd open it it'd allus turn back ter that place. So she thought she'd better have me."

"Then what did you do, Bill?" asked the boys.

"What do you reckon? I won't a-goin' ter tell her I wus much obleeged; so I jes'——" and he extended his arms.

Of course the boys laughed.

I said: "I think she must have been the right sort of girl, Bill;" and he said:

"I thought so, too, but she jes' lived in here," (touching his head.) "These boys been mighty int'rested, an' thar ain't er word I sed been true; couldn't a'ford fur them ter have all the fun."

"Well, tell us about your courtship of Miss Mol. We know that is true."

"Ne'um; that's jes fur Mol an me ter know."

The boys had been so interested that they had not noticed the powder that Bill sprinkled on the counter.

"Mr. Storekeeper," said Bill, "does you sprinkle sugar 'round like this? Must be rich; certainly 's good;" and, of course they all tasted it.

It was quinine, and it was now Bill's time to laugh.

"You see, I's considerate o' folks. I had er chill

yistiddy, an' wus afraid I'd bring it ter y'awl; chills mought be ketchin'; so I give you this ter count'ract it; don't guess you'll have the chills arter this."

"Now, Bill," they said, "you must tell us another experience for that."

"Well, I ain't a-goin' ter talk 'bout no more gals. I's so tired I don't want er gal in er week. Let's talk 'bout boys. You remember that boy Snipes what wus here las'year? Well, I had more fun out'n that boy; bet he never tole you nothin' 'bout it, though. I tuk him out 'possum huntin' wun night; 'fesser sed he might go. I heard er owl movin' 'round in er tree, an' I tole him it wuz er 'possum. He climbed up, an' the owl kept flyin' frum limb ter limb, an' Snipes couldn't find it. Trectly the owl sed, 'T'whoo,' an' skeered Snipes so bad he let go an' fell ter the ground. 'Twarn't er very tall tree, or it certainly would 'a' kilt Snipes. I don't think he ever heard er owl 'fore, 'caze he 'lowed it must be wrong to go 'possum huntin,' or that ghost wouldn't 'a' hollered at him. I axed him whoever heard o' er ghost talkin'; 'twas er owl; an' he wouldn't b'lieve me. Thin we come ter er tree what had er sure-nough 'possum in it, an I tole Snipes ter try it a'gin, an' he did. He climbed an' caught him by the tail, an' I wus tellin' him er great joke 'bout votin' here on 'lection day, an' Snipes wus slowly comin' down with the 'possum, awful proud o' ketchin' him. Arter er while the 'possum jes' twisted 'round an' caught Snipes right through the finger, an' he dropped down 'nother tree an' like ter 'a' broke his neck, an' of course the 'possum got 'way. He vowed he won't goin' with me no more; but I dressed up one Sat'day night an' come over an' axed him ter go visitin' 'ith me, an' he dressed ter kill; it tuk him 'bout er hour ter git ready, an' we started. I tuk him 'round by the Meth'dist church, through the woods, an' back ter the graveyard. I tole him the folks 'd be mighty glad ter see him, but they wus quiet an' might not tell him so 't fust. I tole him we wus goin'

ter see the Huffstetlers, an' you know thar ain't nobody but the Huffstetlers in that graveyard. I had got Bob Smith ter come 'round an' be standin' thar ready ter 'pear like he wus goin' ter murder Snipes. He called ter us ter halt, an' Snipes got down on his knees ter him. I did, too, ter fool Snipes, an' presently Bob let us off, an' I whooped. The moon 'rose 'bout that time, an' Snipes wus as white as er sheet. He wanted ter fight whin he found out how 'twus, an' pulled out er pistol I didn't know he had, an' Bob an' me had ter git down on our knees ter him in earnes'. I tole him the onliest way that the Huffstetlers could be glad ter see him wus fur him ter be skeered ter death, but he said he reckined they'd be jes' 's glad ter see us. Snipes wus er coward, though, an' 'bout that time er bird what all the noise had skeered 'wake, flew out o' the bushes in the graveyard, an' Snipes run. You heard from that feller lately? certainly would like ter see him."

Bill's wit was running low, and he knew it. Turning to me, he said: "Ain't you rested enough? Let's go home."

I was tired of his harangues. My heart was burdened with the desire to take hold of a mind that was really capable of better things, and develop it. I told him that I would stay with my friend until the following Tuesday, and he went home alone.

CHAPTER X.

"Well, old friend, we have labored a long time to do some good, and there are signs of promise in the sky. I see the dawn that heralds a glorious day."

I was glad to see my friend so hopeful.

"No, you are closer to the Source of Hope than I am to-day. While I recline here, I will listen as you outline the future, and will try to catch inspiration from your inspiration."

As if, indeed, lifted to the clouds, he began:

"I am conscious of the darkness of a night that has been so long that its dampness has become thick and chill. The ground is reeking with pollution, and the nostrils of human beings contract as if to keep the deadly malaria from reaching the lungs. But human beings have caught the contagion, and their brows sweat death. Oh, for light and life! While all earth is still dark and deathly, I look toward the east, and I see the black turned to a leaden gray; and then, as if colors were chasing each other, I see the gray become purple; and the purple has a glow of red under it, which struggles to show itself, and now and then bursts into view. The rich, dark colors fade, and the east is now tinted with pink and silver and blue. They blend into a glistening white. The belated sun rises, and I behold a glorious dawn. The whole sky is ablaze, the whole world in resplendent view. The curtain of moisture has risen, the death dews have been clarified, and now upon each spear of grass the drops sparkle in transparent beauty. The cool, fresh, fragrant air is healing to human beings, and the brows that sweated death now bear the stamp of life that is akin only to that which

follows the resurrection. When night began, I saw a figure sitting listless, inert, awaiting the coming darkness, but unconscious of the night's freight of woes. I watched the shades approach, and saw them enclose him. When the dawn came, I looked and saw again the figure, but it had shaken off its inertness as the night had shaken off its foul disease; and now, erect in the blaze of a perfect day, the figure stands firm and strong, looking up through the ephemeral ether to the Eternal, and the light of heaven shines on his countenance."

Wonderful hope! My soul had caught the inspiration, and I also saw the cracker pass through the perils of his early existence into the higher and better life, stronger and more useful for all he had been, standing as a living, lasting monument to the efforts of years, and as the highest incentive to future labors.

"Ah! my dear old friend," he continued, "it is good for me to have you when the labors become wearying and the discouragements wearing. What is the most practical present effort that will aid in bringing about this result? You have visited nearly all the families in this and the adjoining counties?"

"Yes, I have been with you five months now, and I believe I have seen nearly all phases of the cracker life, and have personal acquaintance with nearly every individual. At first they all wished to know my intention in visiting them. Now they seem to regard me as an old friend, and make no inquiries. Some of them, I think, will be grateful for our intentions, but I fear that all of them, even my faithful friend Bill, will regard our efforts as mistaken kindness. The crackers are thoroughly ignorant of their needs, so fully satisfied with themselves and their life that to convince them of their mistakes seems almost a hopeless task. I think, though, that we had better approach them with an appeal to their minds. Assemble them at the first opportunity and insist upon their patronizing the school. Tuition has been entirely

free. I do not believe it should be so. When it is so they feel as if they are conferring a favor in going to school. When a slight charge is made, they regard it as a business transaction and seek to get the worth of their money. What do you say to charging fifty cents a month?"

"It would not be collected from a dozen of them, but some will value the school, and education as a whole, more if they are charged something. But it will not do to make the effort too patent; they will consider it a scheme for self-aggrandizement. Bring it about as quietly and as easily as possible. Do you know of any meeting that they will have soon?"

Bill had spoken of the candy-pulling party that he had expected to have on his birthday, and we decided to wait until that time, and have a meeting of the young people to discuss this question. It was better to address them collectively than individually, especially as Bill was leader among them, and we hoped that others, seeing his consent to go to school, would follow his example.

We had been in earnest conversation all the morning, and as we went out to dinner a slip of paper was handed me by a servant. No name was signed to the strange note: "Secret conferences are dangerous."

"Who gave this to you?" I asked of the servant.

"A boy brought it; he didn't know who gave it to him, but said a tall man down the road."

I handed it to my friend, saying, "What does that mean?"

He frowned, and said: "Our hopes are too high now to be shadowed by anything of this kind. Some cracker who amuses himself by seeking to worry you, has written it. It is not worth a thought."

"I wish I could regard it thus," I said. Some day I would work out this mystery.

In anxiety to find out the date of Bill's party I hurried home that afternoon. It was bitterly cold, and I

did not start until late. A light snow was falling, but I paid little attention to it until the ground was covered. The flakes fell faster; it was growing dark, and I saw that I must quicken my horse's gait or run the risk of losing my way.

I could keep in the main road very well, but the path to Bill's house was narrow and winding, and by this time was hidden. Turning where I thought I recognized landmarks, I rode carefully through the bushes. My horse stumbled, and finding that I had not struck the track, I tried to find my way back, determined either to return to Walesca, or to go to the village of Pine Log. The snow was blinding; it was impossible to reach the road. Not knowing whether the next step of my horse would be over a precipice or not, I held a firm rein and tried to think what was best. We could not stand still long in the cold and snow; my horse was champing and pawing impatiently, and yet to right or left, front or back I was afraid to turn. Snow, nothing but snow, and it was drifting about us like the folds of a death-shroud.

My friend at Walesca would think that I was with Bill; Bill would think I was at Walesca, and they would not search for me; but the old man would come to remove the snow from his sweetheart's grave, and would find me if the drift should not be too deep. I felt the soft flakes almost to the saddle. My horse made a lunge; it was deeper still. Hope seemed vain. I took my notebook from my pocket, and wrote a note to my wife and one to my friend at Walesca. With a small cord I tied the notebook to the highest limb I could reach, thinking I might be found by this sign.

I then made one more effort to escape from the horrors of my situation. I did not carry a pistol as a general thing, but had borrowed one at Walesca before leaving this time, because the queer note I had received had made me apprehend some mischief from the man of the mountain. I now fired twice in the air and listened.

I thought I heard a rustling sound. I shouted and fired once more. I heard a voice.

"Stop firing!"

I stopped and the figure approached. It was the apparition, taller and more ominous than ever. A shudder crept over me. It spoke again:

"There are other things than secret conferences that are dangerous."

He took hold of my horse's rein; it was well he was tall. The snow came to his waist and would almost have covered a smaller man. He made an effort to move forward, but stumbled. I caught him just as he was going in the drift.

"My horse is strong," helping him on in front of me. "If you will guide him he can carry us both."

He took the bridle, and with a brave effort my horse breasted the drift, while the figure in front of me guided him to the path. Silently we rode the short distance to Bill's house. The man dismounted.

"Whom shall I thank?" I asked. "I am indebted to you for my life; I hope I may be able to render you service some day."

"You have done so to-night," he said. "I could never have arisen from the drift if you had not caught me. We are even now; I have saved your life and you have saved mine."

"Your words are as generous as your deed," I said. "But you have not told me who you are."

"The apparition upon the mountain."

I asked no more, but insisted on his staying all night, or if he would not do that, riding my horse back. He would do neither.

"The horse could not stand another trip to-night. Care for him and yourself. Good-night."

Bill of course, was surprised to see me.

"What does this mean? How did you get here in the snow? Didn't know nobody but me could find the path 't night in the snow. Cur'us you did. You look

kinder tired. 'Pears to me that somethin's happened ter you."

I told him that my horse had got into a drift, and that I had some trouble in getting him out.

I was up a good part of the night caring for my horse; he was stiff from standing so long in the cold, and panting like a human being from his efforts in pulling through the drift.

We went to the White Cliffs, always white, now glistening. I spoke of my dangers the night before, but they were soon forgotten in the magnificence of the scene. The snow looked harmless now, and only a thing of beauty. Untainted by contact with pollution of any sort, unbroken by track of man, it reminded me of being "unspotted from the world." A snow-covered mountain is a fit emblem of goodness untainted with evil. The whole looked like a sheet of purity tenderly let down to cover the stains of the world. The entire mountain was of pure whiteness, and the eye could not look upon it with comfort; the glare was such that each crystal seemed to reflect the prismatic colors as the noonday sun shone upon them. So it is that we cannot gaze upon perfect purity sometimes, and good people are not always popular.

"Well, if mountain apparitions are life-savers, they are as good as the monks that live on the Alps; so you need feel no further fear," said my friend.

"I am greatly relieved, but the mystery is a mystery still."

We were going home, when I thought of my notebook, and we went to look for it. On the way we found the old man shoveling the snow from the lone grave.

"Oh!" I said, "the show is so soft and beautiful, it seems to me she would like it to cover her."

But he went on with his task. He seemed so tired that we offered to help him.

"Naw," he said, "she wouldn't like fur nobody ter do 't but me."

When the snow was all off, he covered the grave with small, delicate cedar twigs laid so smoothly that, they looked as if they had grown there. It was beautiful, this green mound on a mountain of snow.

We tried to find the note-book, but it was gone—cut away. A note hung in its place: "The note-book will be returned some day."

"Was there anything of importance in it?"

"All my notes and plans regarding the crackers."

"Too bad, too bad; but you can formulate your plans again."

"Yes, but you know we did not wish the crackers to know anything of our efforts. They will appear to them too much like a scheme."

CHAPTER XI.

"Well, Bill, when will the party be now?"

"Ter-morrow night; snow don't matter; done been knocked out o' this thing wunst; ain't a-goin' ter wait no longer. Mol don't live fur, an' I don't keer 'bout the others, 'caze Mol an' me kin have jes' as good er time by ourselves."

I did care, because I wanted to broach the subject of the school to a number.

A few came—very few—but each boy brought his sweetheart. The dressing was unique. They were in their best clothes, and these were of all colors. It might almost be called a rainbow party. The girls all had their dresses fastened with pins, which seemed to serve the two purposes of use and ornament. "Pin-money" evidently meant something to the cracker girls. There must have been two rows down each dress. Mol wore a pink calico skirt, blue calico basque trimmed with red, and yellow ribbon in her hair.

Bill announced them in his original way:

"You's been interduced ter all these gals and boys, but you dunno how they pairs off."

He made them all stand in a row, with Mol and himself at the head.

"This 's Bill Collins and Mrs. Bill Collins what's ter-be. We done put off our weddin' like we've done put off this party, but we ain't a-goin' ter put 't off much longer. This 's Bob Smith, an' likewise Mrs. Smith what's a-goin'-ter-be. She's Miss Polly Hopkins now. This is Mr. Jim Brown and his gal, Miss Silla Hystepper. This is Mr. Owens Hockett an' Miss Betsy Nustiner. Whin y'awl goin' ter be married, Owens?"

This 's my hon'r'ble friend, Mr. John Pettydo an' his gal, what's 'bout five years older'n him. John says that don't make no diff'rence, an' of course she don't think it does. Does you, Miss Bell? She's Miss Bell Phue."

The young woman blurted out in the usual boisterous cracker way. Bill took no notice of her, but kept on:

"This 's Mr. Bob Barrow an' Miss Della Doolittle. This 's Mr. Arnold Catlin an' Miss Jess Nicely. You knows 'm all; but, you see, I didn't think you know'd 'm in pairs. Well, it's jes' iike I said, an' I thinks we'll all be married 'fore next month."

They all looked as silly as possible, but pleased with Bill's manner of announcing them. I had made friends of most of these young people, and my presence did not seem to be an embarrassment.

"Come, mam, let's bile the 'lasses."

Each boy had brought a little bucket of molasses, and Mrs. Collins emptied it into one large vessel. The fun then began, girls crowding around to stir the molasses, and boys crowding around the girls. I am sure they could not have breathed with comfort, and I thought it was well that no more had come. When the candy was ready to pull, they divided it and pulled it. Then it was put out in the snow to cool. When cool the candy-cracking began. A piece of candy was suspended from the ceiling, the young men and women were blind-folded, and each knocked at the candy. The one who first knocked it down was supposed to be the one to be married first.

About the time the knocking began, three young men from the college at Walesca came. They were strangers to everyone there. They had simply heard of the candy-pulling, and had come without an invitation. They looked like doubtful characters, and I thought it a shame to have the innocent fun of the cracker boys and girls broken in upon by their presence. They were dudish in appearance, and came for no other purpose

than to guy these mountain folks. They asked to participate, and Bill very generously allowed them to do so. He said, however:

"Why n't you come sooner an' bring yer 'lasses!"

One answered in a supercilious manner: "We thought there were lasses enough here."

"Well, thar ain't; reckin' you kin knock, though."

I knew what they meant; Bill did not. The girls were delighted with these young men. They introduced themselves as George Gaines, Robert Callaway, and Frederick Lewis. Callaway was blindfolded and he asked if he could knock first.

"Naw," said Bill, "I 'lows I's-a-goin' ter do that myself."

He knocked, and strange to say, missed the candy. Bill rarely missed anything, but he was angry this time. Callaway next struck the candy and knocked it down. Bill was furious, and wanted to knock Callaway down, claiming that he could see through the blindfold. I thought so too, but persuaded Bill to say nothing more about it. Callaway went immediately to where Mol was sitting, gave her the candy and entered into conversation with her:

"That fellow Collins is 'most too much of a boaster. He does not always know who he is pitting against."

I expected Mol to resent this, and even feared she would make a scene, but she only laughed and said:

"Yes, Bill does think he's smart, an' he needs ter be tuk down."

I was surprised at her; but women are foolish sometimes. Callaway talked to her all the evening, and Bill could scarcely stand it. I felt sorry for Bill, and disgusted with Mol. The candy-pulling which he had looked forward to with such delight for so long was ending unhappily for him. Faithful Bill and faithless Mol! The other two college boys attempted to monopolize

two other girls, but they were not such heroes as Callaway was, and not so popular.

"Miss — ah! tell me your name," said Callaway to Mol.

"Miss Smith," I said.

"Thank you," to me.

"Your first name, Miss Smith! I never call young ladies by their surnames; it is so formal."

"Mol," she said.

"Ah! you don't allow people to call you that? Miss Mary, of course. I'll just say Mary; it's easier, you know."

Mol rallied here: "Mam always calls me Mol, an' — ever'body else does, an' I reckon I can't change it now."

"And who did you start to say just now? Not everybody — just *somebody*, who calls you Mol, and you wouldn't like to change it on *his* account?"

"Bill allus calls me so."

"What, that boastful fellow that knocked the candy before me a while ago? Why; you are too nice a girl and too pretty to have that rude, rough man call you by that name. The first thing you know he'll be boasting that he calls you so."

"Taint nothin' ter boast of," she said; "I reckon Bill never thought o' that. He's allus called me so ever since I wus er leetle gal."

"Well, it's a shame. I expect I'll have to settle it with him some day;" and then the conversation became less personal.

I was glad it did. I had been disgusted with Mol a little while before, but, taking everything into consideration, she had done better than many girls do in such cases. The insolence of a man like Callaway is so easy that few girls would think they could resent it; it would seem a reflection upon them to notice it. Never, young ladies; a woman must notice and show that she notices such insinuating, appropriating conversation. Danger is insidious, and no matter how young men may try to

laugh off a thing of the kind, as Callaway would certainly have done if Mol had been more decided in her rebuff; and no matter if they even seek to cast reflection upon *you* for noticing it, be sure that your doing so will be right. A woman must resent the slightest familiarity at its inception. Trust me. I shall soon be an old man. I have seen the world and know it is so.

"Well, the candy's all pulled an' knocked. Let's tell tales now. Whoever can tell the biggest yarn I'll give 'm er prize; ain't goin' ter tell you what the prize is, but it's the nicest thing yer kin think of. You kin have the fust pop this time," said Bill, speaking to Callaway.

I felt relieved to know that the entertainment would be general, but it did not become entirely so. Callaway sat by Mol all the time, and commented upon those who were trying to entertain, though his own effort was a signal failure.

He began: "I am entertained pleasantly enough without telling what you call yarns. That's a very inelegant word anyway. I saw a cow once, with two heads, and she was eating through both of her mouths. I don't guess you can tell anything more wonderful than that."

"Oh, yes," said Bill; "this ain't my tale now, but I's seen men with er thousand heads—er head fur ever'thing, an' each one stronger and bigger an' more sensible than some men with wun head an' no manners."

Callaway laughed affectedly, and said: "Nothing personal meant, I hope?"

"Naw, 'tain't meant fur nobody 'cept what the cap fits—no more'n er bundle 'o paper drapped in the road fust day o' April 's personal."

"Stop now, Bill," I said; so he stopped, and the story-telling went on.

Bob Smith said he had seen a chimney so crooked that you could look out of the west side of it and see the sun rise in the east.

"Now, that ain't nothin'; I's seen er chimney so straight you had ter stan' on your head to see out'n it," said Bob Barrow.

"Well, I don't tell chimney yarns," said Owens Puckett, "but I've seen a man jumped from the top o' Pine Log mountain an' not git kilt."

"That'll have to be ruled out, because it couldn't be so," said George Gaines.

"Naw, 't won't be ruled out neither. I didn't say the man jumped ter the bottom o' Pine Log. I said he jumped from the top—jes' jumped on the nex' rock, 'bout four feet," said Puckett.

"I've seen six ye'rs o' corn on wun stalk—good long ye'rs, too," said John Pettydo.

"You must have made a lot of whiskey that year," replied Lewis.

John's father ran a blind still. John did not deny it.

"Naw, whiskey's better fur standin', they say, an' I thought I would let this stan' 'fore 'twus made, an' see how it 'd be. The stalk didn't have but wun ye'r on't, but I kept it for five years, you see, an' that made six ye'rs on the stalk, an' likewise on the corn. We ground it thin, an' it jes' made wun glass o' liquor. Fred Lewis come ter the still that day and drank it. That's the reason he ain't got no sense now, 'twas so strong.

"Well," another began, "I's eaten er ham ten years old. Dad allus keeps the pigs ten years 'fore he kills 'm."

This was growing tiresome, and Bill began:

"Y'awl tired o' yarns now. I's goin' ter tell er show 'nough tale. Better listen keerful. I know er boy—he's 'bout five feet tall—got white hair an' blue eyes, an' er head that don't hold er nutful o' sense. He's awful dudish, an' he goes whar he ain't wanted. He went ter another boy's house wun night, an' acted mighty upish; tuk the other boy's sweetheart off an' talked ter her, an' said more mean things 'n the other boy could stand, so

he jes' p'lightly axed him out'n his house, an' the little dudish feller thought it 'd be big terstay. So the boy whose house 'twas jes' got his shotgun an' fixed that dude so he wouldn't bother nobody else. Thar warn't no trial 'bout it, neither." Turning to Callaway, he continued, "I hope you knows the feller?"

"The cap doesn't fit this time; I don't know him."

"Thin, it's like I tole you. Takes shotguns ter teach some folks who they is."

Callaway pulled out a pistol and fired, but I was near enough to throw up his arm, and the bullet went whizzing across the room, rebounded, and furrowed the floor. The excitement was terrible, but Bill's friends were in the majority. I told the three young men from Walesca that they had better leave at once, that Callaway's was already a case for the grand jury, and they had better not make it one for a criminal jury. He looked like a bully, but was afraid of the crowd, and he and his companions left.

Before doing so, however, he turned to Mol and said: "I'll see you again."

She answered nothing.

I told Bill that I was ashamed of him, a boy who had such fine control over his temper when he chose to exercise it. I felt sorry for Mol. She was angry with Bill and indignant with Callaway, and was conscious of having herself been the cause of the trouble. There was loud talking about what must be done with Callaway, and in the midst of it all came a knock at the door. No one was brave enough to open it at first. It was thought that Callaway would fire into the room and run. I finally asked who it was. The door was pushed ajar and my note-book thrust in. I picked it up and opened the door wide. The apparition of the mountain was walking slowly off.

"Stay here," I said to the boys and girls, and I followed the man.

He was just going out of the gate, and I soon overtook him.

"Won't you tell me who you are?"

"No; don't ask that again."

"Who was that?" asked Bill when I returned.

"Only some one who came to return my note-book. I left it on the mountain the other night. I don't know the man's name."

I told them that Callaway could be indicted for carrying concealed weapons, and asked them not to have any trouble about it.

I then asked when they, with all their friends who were not then present, could assemble to talk over some matters with me. Two weeks from that night was fixed as the date, and they dispersed.

Bill, of course, took Mol home, though they were very angry with each other. When he returned we had a quiet talk, and Bill was sorry for his rash conduct.

"Whin you sees er feller tryin' ter steal yer gal, what you's loved so long, it's hard ter keep quiet," he said; and I agreed with him.

Callaway was indicted and fined; he was also sent home from school, as were Lewis and Gaines; but they were told that they might return if their future conduct warranted it.

CHAPTER XII.

I went the next day to see Nicely's child, who was ill. Bill went with me. He was fond of children and was good to his little brothers. He took the little fellow some of the candy left from the night before. We found the child better, and even able to eat some of the candy. Mrs. Nicely was worn out with nursing, and Bill said :

"Let me play 'ith him while you rest."

The woman lay down and slept for two hours, while Bill amused the child. He made a snow man just in front of the window, where the little fellow could see it, and I watched with delight his generous efforts and their happy reward. When the child grew tired of this, Bill and I snowballed to please him. Bill was unlike most of the crackers in one thing; he was industrious enough to engage in some amusements. Most cracker boys will lock themselves indoors to keep from snowballing; it is too hard work. The little boy was rosy with glee, and his mother fresh from rest when she awoke.

"Mam, I wish Bill 'd come ever' day," said the boy; and Bill looked repaid for his trouble.

On our way home he said: "Mr. Ramla, what makes folks feel good an' happy whin they jes' help other folks er leetle bit? They don't feel so when they help theirselves."

"What do you think of it, Bill?" I asked.

"Well, I'se thought 'bout it er heapsence I've been helpin' mam plow an' keep the place. I's er lot happier an' I'se watched other folks what helps people. This here man over 't Warlesky what runs the school thar, he's allus helpin' somebody, an' he allus looks happy. An' you, Mr. Ramla——"

"Everybody, Bill, who tries to do good is happy. Tell me what you think it is."

"Well, it seems ter me they preach wrong ennyhow. The preachers preach er lot 'bout what folks do, an' don't say much 'bout what they don't do. I b'lieve dad'd er been er heap better ef the preacher'd made him b'lieve that he orter help'd mam, instid o' tellin' him all the time that he ought not ter chaw'd an' drank, 'specially ef he'd 'a' told him how much happier he'd er been, an' not how much happier he'd 'a' made mam. Thin, you see, dad would er done it fur hisself, an' thin he'd er learned ter do it 'caze 'twas right. It's jes' like makin' er heap o' dollars, an' makin' wun dollar. Whin er man wuks fur hisself all the time he's makin' jes' wun man, but whin he wuks fur others he's makin' er lot o' folks. The Lord wuks fur us all the time. I gits up in the mornin'; I finds he's made the sun rise fur me; I gits tired, an' I finds it gits dark fur me. The corn don't grow, an' it rains fur me. I needs er leetle money right bad, an' I comes here on the mountain an' finds sometimes 'fore I look fur it er great big fat pine tree ter make splinters out'n."

He stopped short, faced me, and said: "Mr. Ramla, do you want ter know why I think folks 's happier whin they helps other folks? It's 'caze they feel more like the Lord."

A poor cracker boy whose opportunities for knowing the right had been few was surely not far from the kingdom when he thought like this. I told him I agreed with him; and I repeated that little gem, "Abou Ben Adhem," and told him of the poet that thought as we did.

He said: "I want you ter l'arn that ter me;" and I taught him the poem that night.

Crude as his expression was, Bill had more of the spirit of Christ than many who have professed His name for twenty years and never demonstrated their belief in the practices of their lives. I had watched Bill's life

for five months. It was almost anomalous. Sometimes the rough, untrained cracker element would predominate. At other times a beautiful Christian element would manifest itself.

The next day we went again to see the child. It was its wish that we should come every day. And so for many days the little fellow was amused, the mother relieved, and Bill's life made better and more beautiful.

At last the boy was well enough to go out, and he enjoyed playing and romping with Bill. There was a large dog about the place; the moonshiners keep the fiercest dogs. Bill and the child were playing with this creature one day, when the dog began suddenly foaming at the mouth, sprang forward and was in the act of grasping the child's arm, when Bill threw his own in the way. He throttled the dog, and the struggle between the two was terrible. It was all in an instant, or I could have prevented it; but at last I found a gun and killed the mad animal, though not before he had bitten poor Bill.

To wait even ten minutes before doing anything to the wound might be fatal. I remembered the case of Gabriel in Eugene Sue's wonderful book, "The Wandering Jew." Poor Bill looked appealingly at me. I shall never forget that beseeching gaze.

"Mr. Ramla, will I be jes' like him?" pointing to the dog. "Must I die like er dog? I have tried not ter live like wun."

"There is just one thing that will save you, Bill, and that is to apply a red hot iron to the place immediately."

An old hoe was leaning against the house. I put it in the fire, told the poor fellow to lie down, and applied it. Bill closed his eyes, but held his arm firm while the fire and the deadly virus burned and hissed at each other. I stood at arm's length to keep the foamed saliva from spewing upon me, and I told Bill to cover his face. When the fire had burned out, having

consumed the virus, I hoped, I uncovered Bill's face, and the brave young cracker seemed to have passed beyond the reach of pain or danger. I did not know I loved the boy so. As I looked upon the seared arm and the pale, distorted face, this mountain boy seemed very dear to me. I called and shook him. The crying child climbed over him, and fear and hope battled. We poured water over him and rubbed him, and at last he opened his eyes.

"Is it burned enough? 'Twas pretty bad, Mr. Ramla; seemed 's ef I couldn't keep alive; but mebbe it'll be all right now. Is the boy all right?"

The moonshiner's wife had gone for her husband, and he came in grumbling about his dog having been killed. After he saw Bill, though, he relented, and helped to take him home on a litter, as Bill had been so weakened by pain that he could hardly stand. We were anxious about him a long time, but no sign of hydrophobia appeared, and he got well and strong again. To this day, however, a deep scar bears testimony to his heroism.

Not long after this occurrence, I met the strange man whom I had not spoken of except to my friend. I stopped him.

"You did me a great service not long since—the greatest service that one man can do another. But you follow me wherever I go; you seem to have saved my life in the snowdrift to kill me by slower means. If I come out on the mountain to rest, you are there. If I go to see a sick person, you follow me there. If I visit my friend at Walesca, you are there; and I will not be hounded down in this way. What do you mean by dogging me like this? Tell me now, and I will settle it with you, or I will settle it anyhow. You shall not pass me until I know who you are and why you are watching me."

I was excited; he was perfectly calm.

"You have undergone a good deal since you have been in this section. The strain of the last week or two

alone has been sufficient to try your nervous strength. I do not wonder that you approach me in this manner. Your charge is just, too. I have watched you closely for five months. I know your business here; I know, too, better than you do the prospect of success or failure."

"Tell me, then," I said.

"Not yet. You must work out your own cause. You say I have hounded you. Only criminals can say this and mean it. In all my watching you, I have not interfered with your work or your personal liberty. To watch you is my right, and you must not object to it. You do not know it; I could not expect you to know it, but I have saved your life from other dangers than the snow-drift, and you have cause to be grateful for my watch. I meant what I said; I wrote you that secret conferences were dangerous. They are so everywhere, especially here among suspicious people. Be as open as you can, use wise council, don't fear me, and go on with your work. I am dangerous only in defense. Do not seek to know who I am. Reserve your threats, and I will not harm you; but persist in trying to discover my aim and purpose in watching you, and you place yourself in fearful peril. Ask no man my name or my business. Remember."

He started off.

"Stop," I said. "If you know my purpose in being here, help me accomplish it."

"I have said work out your own cause," was his answer; and he left me more bewildered, if possible, than ever.

On my way home I stopped to see Mol and her mother. Mol had gone to town. The mother talked very confidentially to me, as she often did. She was anxious for Bill and Mol to marry.

"Ever' since they wus leetle chil'luns, you see, they's been lovin' wun another, an' it 'peared like 'twas bound to be. Bill never thought o' no other gal, an'

Mol never thought o' no other boy. Now, 'twarn't so with me an' my old man, an' 'twaren't so with Bill's dad an' mam. We never thought much 'bout love; we thought we must marry, an' we married 'fore we ought ter, I reckon; leastwise, 'fore we thought o' who we was marryin'. Now, I don't mean no disrespect ter my old man dead an' gone; he wus better ter me 'n mos' men is ter thur wives; I tried ter be good ter him too, but we warn't happy like Mol an' Bill allus 'pears like they air."

"Well," I said, "I am glad you feel that they are going to be happy."

"But I don't feel so now," she said; "I hardly think they'll marry. Mol allus was superstitious kinder, an' so wus Bill. They won't either o' 'm talk 'bout old Mr. Brown an' his sweetheart what's buried on the mount'in. Seems so much like them, they say; an' Mr. Brown called 'm wun day whin they wus little wuns, an' 'fore he knew they loved wun 'nother, an' told 'm 'bout it, an' how they mus'n't have that 'sperience; I used ter laugh an' tell 'm they warn't bound ter be like them. But I feel sorter superstitious now, too, it seems."

I asked her why she felt so, and she said that since Bill's party Mol and Bill had not been such good friends, and she feared they never would be again. Callaway had been to see Mol twice, and Mol seemed to like for him to come, and she was cross with Bill lately. Bill did not know that Callaway had been there, but she feared would find it out and have trouble with him.

I told her I thought Callaway had been sent from school, and had not been in the neighborhood since.

He was there last week, she said, and she feared would come home with Mol this evening. He was staying in Cartersville. She begged me to speak to Mol and persuade her to have nothing to do with Callaway.

I remembered that the strange man had told me to be very open in all my dealings with these people, and I

knew that, to get along in the world, it is best to be as kind as possible to every one, to treat everyone as your friend, but to have as little as possible to do with lovers' affairs and family quarrels. But Bill had served me so long and so well that I could not refuse to do him this kindness. So I bade Mrs. Smith good-bye, and went to meet Mol.

CHAPTER XIII.

Down the road a little ways she was coming—alone, however. I felt relieved, and walked rapidly to meet her. As I drew near I saw a man's form just passing around a curve in the road. It was Callaway's. Though I had seen him only once, I easily recognized him by his swaggering, lounging walk, characteristic of his manner the night of Bill's party.

"You have had company, Miss Mollie. Why did your escort not come all the way?"

"'Caze I didn't want him ter. Bill's sich er goose he don't want nobody ter go 'ith me but him, an' he gits mad an' makes er fuss. I'm gettin' tired o' Bill's fuss-in'. He better mind, or I won't marry him yit."

"You might find a more quarrelsome man than Bill, Miss Mollie, he is a good-natured boy, and brave and true. Take my advice, and don't be unkind to him."

"I ain't never been unkin' ter him, but he is ter me."

"He does not mean to be, I am sure," I said. "He's only worried when he thinks of your going with an unworthy character."

"I ain't been 'ith no unworthy character."

"You do not always know," I said.

"I know's well as Bill. He thinks some's unworthy what ain't."

"Miss Mollie, boys are more apt to know than girls whom it is best for girls to accept as escorts. I know better than my wife with what young men my daughter should go."

"Well, Bill don't know Mr. Callaway, but he tole me the night o' the 'lasses stew that ef he ever saw me

'ith him he'd never have no more ter do 'ith me, an' I tole him I didn't keer ef he didn't, 'caze he didn't know what he wus talkin' 'bout."

"He told you right," I said. "That night was sufficient to reveal Callaway's character."

She flushed.

"Mr. Callaway 's er nice man, as nice 's ennybody."

"I am sorry you think so," I replied. "He did not appear so to me. Miss Mollie, this fascination is strange. Mr. Callaway was not very kind to Bill, you remember."

"Oh! he wus jes' teasin' Bill; he sed he wus, an' Bill didn't have sense 'nough ter see it."

"You do not like Bill's teasing sometimes. How is it that you can like the trait in anyone else?"

"Oh! Mr. Callaway ain't been teasin' me, but I wouldn't mind fur him ter, 'caze he's so nice."

"Miss Mollie, there is a flower that blooms in your garden in the spring; it is very handsome and of brilliant color. In the East that flower is cultivated in large gardens for the purpose of obtaining a deadly drug, which will kill a person who is not accustomed to taking it. Near where this flower is cultivated in the East is another plant, not so attractive to the eye, but from it is made a balm, so soothing and healthful that Christ likened himself to the balm of Gilead. Don't wait until poison is distilled from the poppy to think of this. Think of it now; and always, Miss Mollie, look below the surface to find character. Callaway has been saying pleasant things to you, and you like them. That is natural, but the circumstances under which he said some pleasant things to you at Bill's party and the manner in which he said them did not please me. You are a sensible girl. Do the sensible thing, and let Callaway alone."

"But I'se tole him that he kin come ter see me ter-night."

"Tell him when he comes that he cannot come again. I mean no unkindness to Callaway, but I am in-

terested in you and Bill. Be firm, Miss Mollie. The trouble with young women is that they are not firm enough with a man like Callaway."

When I got home Bill was getting ready to go and see Mol.

"You dunno, but I ain't been very good ter Mol lately. I got mad 'ith her 'bout that man Callaway, an' sed what I ought not ter 'a' sed. I's goin' ter tell her I's sorry."

"I want you to stay with me to-night, Bill, and help me if you will, and to-morrow night, you know, all the young people will meet here, and you can go early to bring Mol, and make up your little trouble then. Will that do?"

"I b'lieve it'll do better, an' wun day won't make much diff'rence."

Generous fellow!

The next night all the cracker boys and girls from five miles around came. Bill brought Mol early, and they seemed to be in a good humor with each other. I had an opportunity of asking Mol about Callaway. He had come, and she had refused to see him again. She looked happier, and I told her so. After a merry game or two, and everybody looked fresh and happy and expectant, I called them to order.

"My dear young friends, I have called you together this evening to make a proposition to you. I have been here among you five months. You have been kind to me, and I have learned to love you. I came because I was interested in your welfare, but I am a thousand times more interested in it since I know you. I had thought that you and your parents before you, and their parents before them, had lived here in the mountains without culture and without hopes. And more, I had thought that you were a sinning people beyond what I find you are. I think now that, though these things may in part be true, yet you are a people worthy of honor in many respects, strong in some in which other

people are weak. I find you with capacities, and all that I could hope for any class I hope for you; but you need culture. In the valleys nowhere have I found greater talent, but it is undeveloped; untutored genius roams wild; I beg you to direct it in given paths. At Walesca you have a rare opportunity. The school there is not a brush arbor university; neither is it a makeshift. It would be a thorough, broad, liberal Christian institution if you chose to make it so. At its head is a man whose life among you speaks for itself. Have you thought of his discouragements? He would make the school equal to any in the State if you would support him: but last year it closed with only seven students. Do you think he is benefited by being here? There are large places open to him now; honor and fame stand at his door constantly, and beg him to come out of the mountains. But because he loves you, because he admires you and honors you, because he hopes for you, because he has confidence in you, he stays. You think it is his way of making a living, and that he must look out for himself; it is his way of helping you. You think it is exclusively his work, and if it does not prosper it is his fault; it is your work as much as it is his, and if it does not prosper you are responsible. Did you ever regard it as a great work depending upon you? Would not such a feeling as that inspire you? I have been with you a long time without your knowing the purpose for which I came. I came to help you and to help my friend at Walesca—not to help him make money, but to help him in his work for you. The second term of the school for 1880-81 opens January 2nd. How many of you will go to school and bless it and be blessed yourselves? I think you are my friends—do this for me.”

“I’s ’t goin’ ter be free?” asked some one.

“Not entirely,” I said. “There will be a tuition fee of fifty cents a month for students over eighteen. You will value it more for paying something.”

The comments began.

"I don't have fifty cents er month ter spend in t'bacco, an' I ain't a-goin' ter give no school that."

"I's goin' ter be married this winter, an' I ain't got no fifty cents ter give 'way. I have ter buy candy fur my gal."

"I got ter git splinters ter sell."

"I ain't a-goin' ter walk three miles and set in er room all day an' hold er book up 'fore me; I've got more sense now 'n that teacher. He come home 'ith me wun day, an' ever' tree on the way he axed me what 'twas; he didn't have no more sense 'bout trees 'n er goat—not 's much, fur er goat knows whin he's eatin' oak leaves, but he didn't know er oak from er sweetgum. I stopped an' looked at him an' axed him how 'twus he wus teachin' school."

"Well, I's been thar ter school wunst, an' I didn't larn nothin', an' I don't want ter go no more."

"I like you mighty well, Mr. Ramla, but I can't do that fur you."

Bill arose. "Well, I'll tell y'awl what I think. I think Mr. Ramla's right. He's been here er long time, an' he's been mighty good ter us. He wouldn't tell us nuthin' that ain't fur our good. I know I don't know nothin' in books, an' I kinder think I orter. We's used ter lyin' out on the mountain an' havin' er easy time, an' it'd go hard ter set in er room an' be still an' steddly all day; but we need it. Now, I's under dues ter Mr. Ramla, an' ef I don't go fur no other reason I'd like ter go ter please him."

"Bill, ain't you paid fur your dad's corfin yit? Pretty dear price!"

"Well, I ain't under no dues ter no man fur nothin', an' I ain't a-goin' ter do nothin' what I don't want ter do."

"You're right, Jim; life's short; take it easy. Dad'll have ter be buried in er pine box 'fore I'll go ter school ter pay fur his corfin."

"Mr. Ramla's done more fur me 'n pay fur dad's coffin. He kep' me out o' one jes' the other day."

"I do not want pay for any little thing I may have done for any of you," I said. "I only want you to pay yourselves your just dues. You owe yourselves an education."

"Don't have ter pay what I owe myself; ain't no way o' collectin' the debt; ain't a goin' ter sue myself: never pay what you don't have ter, I say."

I was beginning to think that I was wrong in telling them they had hopes.

"Well, folks," said Bill, "I's made up my mind. I 'spected ter be married this winter, an' it's er awful disapp'intment not ter. My mind's made up the other way though, now. I'll go ter school wun year ennyhow. How many o' you will do the same? Let's vote."

Six voted to go, four girls and two boys. Mol was not among the number. Bill was making a sacrifice, I knew. He walked over to where Mol was sitting.

"Mol, will you wait?" he said.

"Naw," was her unqualified reply.

"Thin, I's sorry Mol." His eyes flashed. Great tears stood in them.

She looked at Bill for an instant, turned, and went out. He followed her, but she sent him back and went home alone. Bill walked close behind, however, and saw that no harm befell her.

We separated for the night. I thanked them for their presence, and arranged with those who voted in favor of going to school to enter after the holidays.

When Bill returned I told him that he had done a noble thing, but I was sorry it had cost him so much.

"Do you reckon Mol'll ever come 'round?" he asked. "She didn't use ter be this way; ever'thin' I sed was right; I don't know what's the matter 'ith her now."

"I hope she may be persuaded that you are right and go to school with you. It would be a great thing for you to be educated together, and then marry."

"I think so too," he said; "but Mol's mighty set these days. I reckon she thinks I am too."

"To be set in the right way is a great thing, Bill. It requires strength of character to stand by it. Strong men alone move the world to-day, and you have proven yourself strong to-night. To be set in the wrong way, when you see that it is wrong, is only stubbornness, that if turned in the right direction would be a power. Mol must see some day that you are right and stand by you, and then you two will be potent forces. Wait, Bill, and however it be with Mol in the future, be sure that you are right not to change."

I went to see Mol the next day and tried to dissuade her from her course, but it was impossible. Once she seemed almost willing to go to school, and then she said:

"Naw, Bill shan't treat me jes' like he wants ter. I's waited long 'nough fur him now."

"Miss Mollie," I said, "you will not listen to me, but go over to Walesca and talk to my friend or write to my wife, and she will reason with you better than I can."

"I can't write."

"My friend will gladly write for you."

She still remained stubborn, but I heard that she went to Walesca that day. The real trouble was Callaway. He had made promises to her, extolled his own worthiness and disparaged Bill; and although she had told him not to come again, in her inmost heart she wanted him to come again, and believed he would. That day I met Callaway.

"Look here," he said, "what do you mean by meddling with my business? You've been to a young lady and maligned me and advised her not to have anything to do with me."

"I did advise her not to have anything to do with you, but I did not malign you."

"Well, what do you mean by advising her not to

have anything to do with me? I'm as good a man as you are. I guess you've been speaking for yourself instead of for Bill."

"Mr. Callaway, you have revealed yourself and justified my advice to Miss Smith in your last remark. Your accusation shows clearly your own purpose. I am a married man. I am here solely to do these people good, and such conduct as yours at Bill Collins' party, and since that time, retards the work I am engaged in and interferes with the happiness of two honest, upright souls, whose hearts have been linked from infancy, and whose lives are too pure to be marred by contact with you."

"Who interfered with their happiness last night?" he asked.

"I advised them for their good last night," I replied, "not for my pleasure, except as entirely secondary. One was wise enough to see that I was right; the other, owing to your wily influence, was not. I have in no way interfered with their happiness."

"Well, you had better stop meddling with my affairs, or I'll tell this man that's watching you so closely a few things."

"Tell him the truth, and I shall be glad for you to tell him many things."

Callaway knew, then, that I was watched. I was sorry for this, for I was fully persuaded that Callaway was a mean man and would not hesitate to do me the greatest injury in his power. I was no longer afraid of the apparition, but I did not know how Callaway might use it to my hurt.

That night Bill said that he would go to see Mol and try to close the breach between them. It was wider, he said, than it had ever been before. The poor fellow was much distressed.

"Bill, what you mopin' 'bout?" I heard one of his friends ask him. "I wouldn't keer ef my gal did go back on me; thar's plenty o' other gals, you know."

"Yes, but not like mine," Bill replied.

The next day Bill told me that Mol had utterly and finally rejected him.

"I dunno what I'll do, she's the onliest gal fur me," he said.

"She'll be sorry some day, Bill; wait and see," I replied.

"Well, *I* ain't a-goin' to change nohow. I'se goin' ter school."

CHAPTER XIV.

At the beginning of the term I went over to Walesca hoping that by this time many crackers had determined to enter school. There was a larger number than ever before, but they were from a distance. At eight o'clock on the morning of the opening I saw Bill with slate and book, and with his lunch in a small tin bucket, coming over the mountain. But he was alone—a solitary cracker. All the others who had agreed to come had failed to do so. I went to meet Bill and walked into the schoolroom with him. Many of the boys and girls sniggered and giggled, as silly school-children will do, and Bill said:

“Mr. Ramla, what’s the matter with these folks? Didn’t they never see nobody ’fore? I don’t see nothin’ ter laugh at.”

Without being so personal as to allow Bill to feel that he was alluded to, the president rebuked the students in a manner so mild, but firm, that I almost wished I was a schoolboy again and under the tutorage of such a man. Surely he was the man to mould the characters of these young people. Bill was in good hands.

The time for examining new students came.

“Bill, what class do you wish to apply for?” the president asked.

“How many yer got?”

The president explained that there was a primary, a preparatory, a freshman, sophomore, junior and senior class.

“Which is the bes’? I giner’ly takes the bes’ goin’.”

They were equally good; everything depended upon the capacity of the student.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Bill.

"What the student knows."

"I thought you come here ter l'arn somethin'; didn't know you 'spected folks ter know er lot 'fore they come. Cur'us college. I know er lot though. Bet I kin take you out here in the woods and l'arn you more'n you ever heard 'bout trees an' snakes an' one thing an' another. Say, won't that pay you fur my l'arnin' ennyhow. You l'arn me five days in a week, an' I'll l'arn you on Sat'day. You dunno how ter plow an' how ter drive steers an' how ter manage er donkey."

"He will do pretty well if he manages you," I heard a boy say.

"Look here; I ain't talkin' 'bout managin' me now. This here is Bill, boy; this ain't Bill, donkey. 'Fesser, I'll l'arn these boys somethin' too, but it won't be like I'll l'arn you. Now, I reckon I'll enter the class that'll put me through fust, 'cize I don't want ter stay in college long. Ever'body's 'posin' me now 'cept you an' Mr. Ramla, an' my gal's gone back on me. You know better'n me whar I ought ter go, but you better put me whar I won't have ter stay but one year. How much kin I l'arn in that time?"

He was told that it depended upon himself entirely.

"Reckin not; somethin' 'pends on you, too. I kin l'arn as much's you kin teach."

He was put in the primary department.

"'Fesser, how long would it take me to get through ef I kep' on?"

"Six years, and I hope you will keep on, Bill," the professor answered.

"Six years! Naw, sir. You think I'd spend six years in this place. Mol'd furgit she ever know'd me, an' I 'spects ter win her back some day. Thin I'd furgit how ter plow an' git splinters. The splinter trees 'd jes' pine fer me, an' the cedars 'd jes' stretch out their limbs, p'intin' ter the pines, an' tellin' me ter 'seedar; an' mam 'd have ter work the place by herself, too.

Naw, can't stay no six years; better l'arn me all you kin this year. Don't 'spect I'll be here no more arter this."

The professor tried to reason with him, but Bill would not be persuaded to stay longer than one year.

"I'll see how much I know by that time, an' thin I'll tell you more about it. Who's goin' ter teach me? You? I's ready ter go ter wuk."

He was told that a lady would teach him, and that it would be impossible to hear any lessons before the next day on account of the number of students to be classified.

"Thin, I'se goin' home. Look here, Mr. Ramla, this here place ain't what folks says 'tis. I don't want no 'oman teachin' me. I know mor'n wimmen folks now, an' I can't 'ford to lose no time, neither; ain't no sense in takin' er whole day ter tell folks what class they b'long in. You think 't is?"

I tried to explain the necessity for the loss of the first day of study, and told him also, that many ladies were better teachers than many gentlemen, especially in the department he had entered. I was afraid he would not come back the next day, but I went home with him and tried to encourage him.

We went to Walesca together the next morning. Miss Blackwell received Bill kindly, but she told me afterwards that she was thoroughly indignant at the utter want of confidence in her which he plainly manifested.

"It was amusing as well as provoking," she said.

She tried to teach him to read by the word method. She spoke of her efforts thus: "Now this is 'and', and you must never call it 'but'; it always looks like this, and you may ever after this know it if you impress it upon your mind now."

"Of course I ain't a-goin' ter call it 'but' ef it's 'and.' You 'spose I'd call er calf er horse? Is that the way you do? Don't want you ter teach me ef 'tis."

The next day Bill brought his donkey. He called Miss Blackwell to the door.

"You see that animule? Well, it's er donkey. The nex' time you see it, don't call it er cow. Now, look at 't right good an' 'press 't 'pon your min' an' you won't furgit it's er donkey. You ain't a-goin' ter charge me nothin' fur yistiddy neither, 'caze I's l'arned you 's much 's you has me."

He heard her teaching a little boy by the object method. The child was absent-minded. There was a picture of a girl pulling fruit from a vine somewhat resembling a cymbling vine. He read: "Girls is cur'us things; they grow on a vine like squashes."

Bill gave a long whistle: "I allus know'd they wus cur'us, but I never know'd they growed like that 'fore. Is that the way you growed, Miss Teacher? No wonder they's plent'ful. Squashes is mighty easy raised. I'll stop school this day an' plant squash seed."

The teacher checked him. She laughed, however, and told the child that girls usually had clinging proclivities, but not that strong. Bill was very disgusted with the word method, however, and really wanted to stop school.

"I kin stay at home an' look at pict'rs, an' I allus did know er cat an' er dog when I seed 'm."

One day Miss Blackwell was teaching Bill's class an object-lesson in primary language. She held up a chestnut burr.

"Class, what is that?"

"A chestnut burr," the children all replied.

"What has been in it?"

"A chestnut."

"Where is the chestnut?"

"I et it," said Bill.

"What is the shape of the burr?"

"Round."

"Where does it grow?"

"On a tree."

"When does it grow?"

"In the summer and fall."

"What is the use of the burr?"

About that time the teacher pressed the burr too hard.

"It's good ter stick the hands o' school teachers an' idjuts," said Bill; and he picked up his books and left the room.

"What'd you fool me an' try ter git me ter come ter this place fur, Mr. Ramla? I didn't think you'd do that."

The poor fellow was almost crying. He seemed to feel as I have felt many a time when I found myself mistaken in a friend. It is not so much the injury that one feels as the sense of confidence shaken.

"I thought you wus er good frien' o' mine, an' I didn't b'lieve you'd 'stroy er feller's hap'ness like this out'n 'twus fur his good. I thought I wus goin' ter l'arn som'thin' an' could write ter you mebbe when you go away."

I felt almost like a criminal.

"Why, Bill, what is the matter?" I asked. "I have not deceived you. This is an excellent school, and the best place for you just now. Are you not learning as fast as you expected? Education is a slow process. Do not be discouraged."

"'T ain't that. Thar ain't nothin' here ter l'arn. That 'oman can't teach me nothin'. This object bizness ain't worth nothin' ter me, an' so 's I's goin' home;" and he went.

It was some weeks before I could persuade him to go back and make a suitable apology to Miss Blackwell. He finally went, however.

"I's sorry ter treat er lady disr'spectful-like, but I ain't sorry I sed what I did 'bout the teachin'. Thar ain't no sense in that."

To accomplish what we so much desired for the crackers, the method was much modified for Bill, and he became more interested and more studious. He refused to pay tuition for the first month, and the matter was

not pressed. It was a long time before so old a boy could be trained to study with profit. His faculties of mind were as wild as the deer upon the mountains, and had to be harnessed before they could be driven. Both he and Miss Blackwell would become discouraged at times, and marks of care began to appear, but they were both brave and faithful. Several times during the year Bill left the school in disgust and anger, but before he reached home he determined to try another day. He learned to read and to write, also something about arithmetic and grammar. He was proud of his knowledge, too, and displayed it upon every occasion. It would, indeed, take vast learning to suppress Bill's boasts, and to teach him how little he knew. Conceit is the greatest trouble with the crackers.

Bill sought to make Mol envious and arouse her regret by his wonderful display of information.

"Mol, you don't know what yer missin'. I's goin' ter be the smartes' man in Georgy; better take me 'fore it's too late. I'll be too smart fur you arter er while. Now, lemme show you how much I know. Gimme some paper." And he wrote: "Mol, I love you, but Callaway don't." Then he said: "Now, you don't know what that is. But the nex' time that man Callaway comes, ax him. I reckon he kin spell 't out."

Callaway went that evening. Mol showed him the slip of paper Bill had left, she told me, but he refused to tell her what it was.

"It's something unkind about you, Miss Mary. I always told you that fellow was a rascal, and this proves him such." He tore the paper into bits and threw them away in apparent anger.

Mol was mortified beyond measure. She came to me the next day with the pieces of paper that she had collected after Callaway left. For her gratification I pasted them on a card, and after some effort deciphered the sentence.

"I am glad of this," I said. "I hope now that you

will never believe Callaway again. He is deceiving you, as he has probably deceived many a girl before, and I think you have cause to fear him. Whether you ever care for Bill again or not, I beg you to have nothing more to do with Callaway."

She had never ceased to care for Bill. I knew it then; but she was a stubborn girl.

CHAPTER XV.

Of course Callaway heard of her coming to me, and one night not long afterwards, when Bill and I were out walking, we became conscious that some one was following us. I thought of the apparition, but had become so accustomed to it that I feared it little now, though a shudder would sometimes creep over me when I saw it stalking in gloomy stride upon the mountain in its peculiar white attire. Strange to say, Bill had never seen it.

"Who is that behind us, Mr. Ramla?"

"Some one out for a walk, as we are. We must not question the movements of persons in public places."

"No, but nobody don't walk here but us, an' I kinder thinks that man Callaway 's meanin' some harm ter me. Ef he don't, I do ter him. He's been ter see Mol lately."

Just then a bullet whizzed by us, so close that it struck my hat. To run would be futile, so we crouched in the bushes, hoping the assailant would lose sight of us. Two men in masks came in sight.

"We have them now," one said, "and will shoot them like dogs."

They came toward us, and I felt sure they had not lost sight of us. They seemed to be searching, however, and we waited. Soon they passed us, but they seemed to know we were somewhere there, and I thought they would soon return, so I whispered:

"Let us catch them, Bill, and wrest their pistols from them."

We sprang upon them, and almost before they knew it, the pistols were in our hands. They ran. We fired, but a turn in the path hid them for a moment, and

they escaped. Their masks had prevented us from seeing who they were; but neither one was the apparition; I knew by their size.

I went to Walesca immediately and had a warrant issued for Callaway. I suspected that his companion was Gaines, but the only evidence was his size, and I did not feel justified in having him arrested. The pistol that we took from one of them was of the same calibre as the one Callaway used the night of Bill's party. The officers found Callaway at home near Cartersville that night. Though he had ample time to get there while I was going to Walesca, he proved an alibi to the satisfaction of the court. I was still confident, however, that the man who had attacked us was Callaway; and so was Bill. Of course Callaway was a bitterer enemy now than ever before. We had him sworn to keep the peace, but an oath was nothing to such a man. Callaway was a coward, too. If he had been a brave man, who would not have tried to shoot his enemy in the back, there would not have been such cause for fear.

Bill was doing so well in school that I tried to persuade others to attend, but it seemed useless. I thought I would visit the old crackers and talk with them about it, though that had always been considered the least effectual method. My friend urged me to make an effort anyway, and I did so with some hope. I went to the old gold-washer who had refused once to even talk about sending his children to school.

"Mr. Downey, how is the gold business now? I hope you are doing well."

"Oh! fine. I kin buy more t'bacco'n I kin chaw these days. How's bizness 'ith you?"

"Well, you know," I said, "I have not paid much attention to my financial affairs for nearly a year now. I have been with you people trying to advance your interests."

"Well, I dunno how you could have ennything ter do 'ith what's in the ground without you come here ter pour

er bag er two o' loose gold fur us fellows ter git out. I know we're gittin' it, though."

I told him that it was not to enrich him in dollars that I came, but to do more for him—to persuade him to send his children to school, that they might be qualified not only to make money, but to make better and more useful men.

"You mean ter say I ain't no 'count in the world? Like ter know what this country'd be 'ithout me. Ef I wus ter die ter-night, thar'd be five hundred folks here screamin' an' cryin'."

I thought there had been almost that many when old James Collins died.

"I do not mean to say, Mr. Downey, that you do nothing for the world, but I do say that you could do a great deal more if you had taken advantage of such opportunities as are now offered your children."

"I never had no sech chances, an' I's glad I didn't, 'caze sombody mought 'a' fooled me inter goin' ter school an' wastin' time. Mebbe I mout 'a' been lyin' 'round like you, doin' no wuk fur er year. You're er good feller," he continued. "I think you means us well but thin you bother er man talkin' ter him 'bout doin' somethin' what he knows ain't best. You see, I's tried not foolin' with schools, an' I gits 'long all right. You ain't never tried it, an' you dunno what you's talkin' 'bout."

I laughed and told him that I thought the same thing of him.

"Now, don't git mad; I wants you ter come ter see me ag'in, but don't say no more 'bout schools. I see er quill o' gold lyin' right yonder in the water; I mus' go an' wash it out. Hurrah fur er man what 's gittin' rich! Good-bye, Mr. Ramla; git all the chillen that will ter go ter school, but please stop by the house an' tell mine ter come an' help thur dad git gold."

I left laughing, but sick at heart. I went next to see another of the gold-washers, a brother of Nicely, the moonshiner. I found him at home.

"Mr. Nicely, how is it that you are not at the washings? I hear that gold is plentiful now."

"Well, Bill Downey ses he gits er heap, but Bill's er powerful boaster. I don't git more'n 'nough ter live on. I've been makin' money, though, in 'nother way. I had er old steer that warn't doin' no good on the patch. I don't raise much cotton or sorghum, you know. Most o' my livin's gold an' I tole my old 'oman that we could borrow er steer wunst er twict er year ter plow, an' she could do the rest hoein'; she's er pow'ful good 'oman ter 'tend ter craps. So I sold that steer, Mr. Ramla, an' what do you think I got fur him? He wus fifteen year ole, an' he couldn't eat grass. Ter tell you the facts in the case, I thought that steer wus goin' ter die. So I tuk him down ter the branch an' made him drink fur er hour. The quill men thought he'd drink all the gold, but I tole 'm 'twas all the same ter me; that I wus goin' ter git gold fur him, an' he won't drinkin' no more'n my sheer. Thin I drive him ter town. 'Here's the bes' plowin' animule in these diggin's,' I sed ter er man; 'I wouldn't sell him fur nothin' I knows of.' 'I's sorry fur that,' he said: 'I wus goin' ter offer you er big price fur him.' 'Well,' I sed, 'ef you need him very much, I's er 'commodatin' man, an' ef you's *obleeged* ter have er steer I'll let you have him ef you can't do better. How much'll you gimme?' 'Twenty dollars.' 'Whoop! you reckon I'd sell my steer fur that? I can't talk ter you. Here, let me git in the store an' buy what I's goin' ter an' git home.' 'I thought you wus goin' ter let me have him fur 'commodation?' he sed. 'Commodation sells higher'n that in this country.' 'Forty dollars, thin,' he sed. 'That sounds more like it.' 'Will you take that?' he axed. I shuck my head. 'Fifty dollars, thin?' 'Yes, ter help you 'long I'll take that,' 'caze I' wus afraid the ole steer'd 'die 'fore he could go enny higher. But ef I hadn't been skeered o' the steer that man 'd 'a give er hundred dollars fur him 'fore I let him go. He pulled out the cool cash an'

handed 't ter me an' walked off 'ith his steer, an' I walked off too, 's fast 's possible. I was *anxious*, you know. The next day the man come over. He'd been all day tryin' ter find me, an' he wanted his money back. 'Bring me the steer,' I sed. 'He's dead,' he sed; an' talked pow'ful mean. 'Thin I don't give you the money.' 'But you'll have ter.' 'Well, I don't reckon 's how I will. See here; I give you er live steer, an' you give me fifty dollars. Ain't that so?' 'Yes.' 'Well, you bring me back the live steer an' I'll give you back the fifty dollars.' He had er shot-gun, but I did, too, an' wus er leetle quicker on the trigger 'n him; so he went off growlin', sayin' he wus goin' ter litigate. He kin litigate, but he can't git that fifty dollars. I don't have ter wash gold now, you see; I kin live on that two year; but I go down now an' thin ter keep my hand in. You been ter see the washers ter-day?"

"Mr. Nicely, I have come to see all the gold-washers that I can to-day about sending their children to school. Do you not think you should send yours?"

"Well, Mr. Ramla, I dunno; I could be teachin' my chilr'n how ter sell steers while they're goin' ter school, an' it'd be er heap more prof't'ble. Bill Collins 's goin' ter school, an' he'd er heap better be gittin' splinters, 'pears ter me."

"He does get splinters to pay his tuition. He furnishes the college with kindling wood and goes to school, and after a while he will be able to do more than get splinters. Bill will be a great man some day; he is doin' wonderfully well in school."

"Reckin he'll ever make enny money by it?"

"Money and fame, and, what is more, he will bless the world with a useful life."

"Be more'n his dad did."

"His father made no effort to become such a man as Bill will some day be. That is just what I am speaking of now, Mr. Nicely. There is no telling what you might have done and might still do for the world if you had had advantages."

"But I don' want ter help the world; I want ter help myself."

"We must not be all for self," I said. "But this is true, the more we do for others the more we are helped ourselves, and, of course," taking another line of thought, "the more we are able to help others the more we are able to help ourselves."

"Now you hit the nail on the head; that's so. Well, I's been thinkin' o' sendin' the chaps ter school. How much do they ax over at Warlesky?"

I told him, and he promised to think about it more. I tried to get him to say definitely then that he would send them, but he would not commit himself, and I would not irritate him by pressing the matter.

I next went to see Mr. Sims. He had just come from Walesca.

"I's jes' been ter town, Mr. Ramla. I tell you they're makin' er heap o' fuss 'bout that college over thar. I never heard so much talk 'bout er place."

"That is what I have come to talk to you about, Mr. Sims. The college is doing better this year than ever before. The attendance is larger, and the management could not be better. It is time you people were taking a pride in the school and supporting it."

"I ain't got no money ter give it. I's proud thar's sech er thing 'bout here, though."

"I do not mean that you should support it with money, Mr. Sims. I should rather have said, let it support you. Send your children to school and let them have all the advantages it offers."

"Seems 'most like I'll have ter. A feller 'll be thought cur'us arter er while fur not sendin'. It us'ter be thought, though, that er man warn't no 'count that'd send his chillun ter school ter git rid o' 'm, but now 't 'pears ter be the fashion ter send 'm."

"The world is more enlightened upon those subjects than it used to be. Will you not send the children right away?"

"Mr. Ramla, ef it's fur thur good I want 'm ter go. I tries ter do what's right by my chillun. But they don't want ter go. They'd er heap ruther wuk."

I called a little boy and asked him.

"Naw, I don't want ter go ter school. Dad never went ter school, an' you reckon I want ter be smarter'n dad?"

I tried to explain to the child, but he would not understand, and the father said it was useless to talk to him.

"Now, I'll tell you; I ain't tried ter git 'm ter go much, but I'll see what I kin do an' let you know. I 'spect it's er good thing."

Not long after this I returned to see if Nicely and Sims were not ready to send their children to school.

"By no means; I ain't er goin' ter send," said Nicely. "That man litigated me out er the fifty dollars, an' I had ter pay fur cheatin' an' swindlin' besides."

Sims said he had not persuaded the children yet. He had spoken to them once only. I begged him to speak again and to send them, even against their will, rather than not at all.

"Naw, that wouldn't do," he protested.

Well, they say the rock is worn little by little.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was April. I had been among the crackers nine months. I had stayed with Bill most of the time, and though he and his family had been as kind and thoughtful as they could be, and had given me the best they had, their means were meagre, and their manner of living, though mine had been humble enough, was different from mine. I had not felt like myself for a long while. The strain of the experience was telling on me. A gloom, whose influence I had never felt before, settled over me, and I realized that he who tries to help the world sometimes wears out in the effort. I had hardly thought before of leaving an unfinished work. In hope and expectation I had always seen my labor completed. Alas! such hopes and expectations are visions only. No man leaves a finished work; the most that any man can do is to contribute his little with a thousand others before and after him. Thus comes the saying: "Other men have labored, and we have entered into their labors."

One day I said to Bill: "Bill, do you not think I have done about all I can for this section? I'm thinking of going home and leaving the work to better hands."

"Who you goin' ter leave in yer place?"

"Oh! some good man will come and take the work after a while. I do not know of anyone just now."

"Thin you ain't a-goin'. Look here, Mr. Ramla, you done er lot fur us folks, an' we ain't ready ter give you up."

"That is largely due to your attachment, Bill; but it is kind in you to say it. I should be delighted to stay with you, and it was my hope to do so, but there is a

greater obstacle than we can remove in the way. My health is failing, and I do not think I shall be able to do further work for a long while—probably never.”

“What! Mr. Ramla, you ain’t goin’ ter die? Well, you look bad. I been so bizzy l’arnin’ I ain’t thought ’bout it. But you lemme go fur the doctor, an’ he’ll fotch you ’round in a day or two.”

“I do not think it is medicine I need so much as rest. I must go home for awhile anyway.”

Bill said nothing, but when he came from school that afternoon he brought the doctor with him.

“Now, Doctor, I jes’ want you ter make Mr. Ramla well. He’s kinder out o’ heart. Tell him he ain’t er goin’ ter die, an’ it’ll help him wonderful.”

I felt glad that Bill had been so thoughtful. Dr. Wells could, at least, advise me what to do.

“You are broken down from the rough life and the worry of your arduous task. You have contracted nervous dyspepsia. You should have treatment for this at once, and to regain your wonted health and strength you should not attempt any labor that will excite or try you for six months at least.”

Why was not my own constitution as robust as other men’s? My friend at Walesca worked much harder than I, with a great deal more to worry him, and he had not broken down after ten years’ test. I went over to see him and told him of my necessity for leaving the work to him for a while, until some one else could take my place.

“I shall wait for you to return; no one else could take your place just now. It would take him as long as it has taken you to know the people and to gain influence with them.”

It was well for my friend that it was decided thus. The worry of assisting a new man in the work would be too much for him. I looked at him now. Strange that I had not noticed it before. He was pale and thin, and looked so worn it was pitiful. He knew my thoughts.

"I can stand it a long time yet, and if I should break down no one will greatly suffer by it. You must go to your family."

I thought it due to people who had received me so kindly to see them all before going, and it was due to the work that I should again urge them to think of it. They all seemed sorry to have me go; it was gratifying to hear their kind expressions.

I went up on the mountain: it was an old friend, and I had some sentiment about it. The old man was by the grave. We had grown accustomed to seeing each other there. He was just through with his work. The mound was covered with arbutus blossoms, and looked like a lovely bouquet. The revolting thoughts connected with the grave had almost lost their force since I had seen this one. The life was not gone. Its influence was yet hallowed, and the very mortality that once enveloped it seemed living, too, as the evening sun cast its last beams upon the fresh, fragrant mound.

"I feel that she and I are nearer together now, Mr. Ramla, than we wus whin she lef' me. 'Twon't be long 'fore thar'll be two like this," touching the grave, "an' thin we'll finish up yonder the life we begun here. Won't you come here sometimes thin an' see that the flowers cover her?—don't matter 'bout me."

I promised. The old man was a Christian, safe in his hopes of a new life with his sweetheart in the beyond.

"I dunno what we'll do up thar, but somehow 'twouldn't be nat'ral ef we couldn't gether flowers an' sit on the mountain an' talk like we useter. They talk er heap 'bout heb'n bein' gold an' pearls an' the like, but I never had no gold nor pearls, an' 'twouldn't seem nat'ral. You know I think it's somethin' like 'tis here, but ever'body loves wun another; an' thim that loved so much here goes together an' thar ain't no trouble—jes' peace."

I told him I thought there might be mountains cov-

ered with flowers there, where he might sit and talk, and I was sure there would be love and peace.

He left me, and I sat alone with the grave and my thoughts. It was possibly nine o'clock when I heard a step approach. I did not move, though I thought it might be Callaway. This time, however, it was the apparition, in his weird dress. The man came and sat beside me.

"You have decided to rest," he said. "It is well; you need rest. You have done a good work here and gained many friends. In all my watch of you, I have found no evil work, no selfish motive."

"I thank you for that," I said, "and I value it more coming from you than from any other person, because you have kept close surveillance over me."

"I have about decided upon my course with reference to a work that you will probably undertake when you return."

"What work do you mean?" I asked.

"I cannot talk to you about it now; but here are papers containing a summary of the dangers that you will encounter in attempting it. Read them carefully."

I thanked him, and he arose to go. He even extended his hand, and took mine in a firm, strong grasp. I left, too, with strange feelings.

Upon reaching home I read the papers. They advised against the interference with blind stills. They mentioned the secret meetings of still-keepers, their constant guard against attack; and further stated that the principal distilleries were owned by one of the most influential and strongest men in the county, and that any man attempting to interfere with them would incur his hatred and feel his power.

I left the next morning, leaving with Bill a small package, and one for his mother. In a day or two a letter with an almost undecipherable address reached me. It was from Bill.

"WARLESKY, April 20, 1881.

"DEAR MR. RAMLA:

"We's sorry you lef us. i ain slep sence you went fer wurrein. Mr. Ramla, you never had no bizness leaven mam an me no monie. we never meant to charge you nuthin fur board. mam's powerful put out, an' so is i; we much obleeged to you tho. I's doing wonderful well in school. Miss Blackll is got more sense then i thot she had; she kin lern me pretty well now. Callaway has ben hangen round Mol agin. What you reckon I better do bout it? I'm fraid she'll love him, an I know he don love her. i wish gals had sum sense. What you think bout this letter. aint it fine for me? jes think er year ago I couldn't no more a rit this lettter than man can beet me tradin. You is the cause of my ritin, Mr. Ramla, you an my sense. both of us orter be proud. make haste come back. 'Scuse spellin an ritin same as I'll do whin you rites to me. Be sure to rite.

Your bes' friend, BILL.

"P. S. Fesser looks mighty bad. i think he'll be sick fore long. I's goin ter speak at commencement. you mus be sure to hear me."

I was more broken down than I thought. When I gave myself up to rest I could not rest. I wanted excitement and change all the time. There is no more nervous state than this. My wife said positively that I should not go back, and every other plea failing, resorted to the one that would most affect me. It was due to her, she said, that I should at least live, and she thought it was due to her that I should regard her wishes and contribute to her happiness by staying at home. I knew her generous heart too well not to know that she was thinking of my good alone. But I felt the truth of the argument, and almost determined to remain. I wrote to my friend and told him so, but destroyed the letter. I told my wife what I had done, and then said to her:

"My brave, true wife, a man and his family must both suffer sometimes for the good they may do; the cause of the many is always greater than the cause of the few. There is a country where no work can separate us; but here there must be partings and pain. I will not sacrifice you more than you are willing to be sacrificed; but you will stay here and care for the home and the little one while I am gone. I know you will."

I wrote my friend that I would come back as soon as I was physically able to do so.

My daughter, then sixteen years old, became very much interested in the work and in my accounts of the crackers. She was especially touched with the old man's story; the sentiment of his life affected her as sentiment always affects young people, and she wished to visit the well-kept grave and its guardian. We decided that she should go to the Walesca school. My wife felt better satisfied on my account, but she was fearful for our daughter. I told her that Katherine could do a noble work there, and be in no danger of contamination.

I did not return to commencement, but my friend wrote me a very amusing account of Bill's effort. Bill said he was too big to speak with the little folks, but that he was going to speak on speakers' day anyway. So, in order to please him, my friend consented, and expected to announce why it was so arranged before Bill spoke. He had invited Colonel —— to deliver an address, but Bill became so excited over the honor of speaking during the commencement in which the Colonel would address the school that he could not wait for his time to come, and when the Colonel entered the room, Bill rushed upon the stage and introduced himself by saying: "'Fessor has not told me it is time to speak yet, but I think 'Fessor is so excited that he has furgotten it, so I will interduce myself. I will speak first and Colonel —— will follow.'" And before he could be stopped, he delivered his speech.

This was not like Bill, but no dependence is to be put in a man who is receiving his first honor; his conduct cannot be judged by his past life; he is an honor man, and his actions in announcing this fact to the public are sometimes insane. Perhaps it was well that Bill did not realize the real honor. He was the first cracker in all that section to display a desire for learning.

Bill himself wrote me of his debut as a speaker:

"Mr. Ramla, I acted the goose, but I made er good speech; lots o' folks said it wus. It wus better than Colonel _____'s."

In six months from the time I had left I returned with renewed energy to the work, taking my daughter with me.

CHAPTER XVII.

Callaway was the first person I saw on reaching Walesca. He wore the military uniform of the school. After I had seen my friend and exchanged greetings with him, I said to him :

"My dear friend, what does this mean? I see Callaway here in the uniform of your cadets; surely he is not in school again?"

"Yes, he is in school. You know we did not expel him; his return was conditioned upon his behavior after he left here."

"And do you offer a premium on vice? Has his behavior not been sufficiently vicious to debar him from entering any respectable school in the United States?"

"I think not; I know of nothing except that I fear he has tried to prejudice Mol against Bill. That has been bad of course, but I think Callaway really loves Mol."

"Do you remember that Bill and I had our lives endangered on the mountain one night, and that Callaway certainly must have been one of the men who fired at us?"

"I remember the circumstance, but it could not be proven that Callaway was the man, and there is very great doubt of it; you must have been mistaken; he proved an alibi."

"To the satisfaction of the court and to *your* satisfaction, it seems."

"My dear fellow, you are prejudiced. Callaway has not been the rascal you think, though he certainly has been a very corrupt boy. That is partly why I took him back, to try to exert a good influence; life is worth little if we

may not stoop now and then to lift a fellow-creature from the slums."

"Reforming low characters is a good work, but placing them where they may influence others for evil and overthrow the work of years in a day is not wise. Callaway can in a single term counteract all the good you have done here in four years."

"That is true, but we will keep a close watch over him. The crackers are not good people, and yet we are bending every energy to bring them here."

"Their meanness is all open," I said, "and it is due largely to ignorance; they are not skilled rascals."

"I have never before known you to be so bitter about anything. What is the matter, my good friend? I am sorry if I have made a mistake in taking Callaway back."

"You may have done right, I cannot tell. It is somewhat a personal matter with me. A man like Callaway is attractive to some girls; young girls are very susceptible, and my daughter is here; she will probably be in Callaway's class, and I would not for the world have a man of his caliber win her heart."

"I should have thought of that; forgive me. But you need not fear; *your* daughter could never fancy a man of his stamp."

"That is kind, my dear fellow, but it is not comforting; I know girls better than you do. But do not let it worry you; I can take Katherine home at any time. It has been foolish in me to speak as I have; but the unexpected sight of Callaway excited me."

The next day I went home with Bill. He was delighted to see me, but I saw he was depressed.

"Mr. Ramla, what you reckon 'Fessor's thinkin' 'bout ter let Callaway come ter school? I'll have ter quit, I s'pect. That boy an' me'll have er fight 'fore two days. Mighty sorry o' it. I was jes' thinkin' 'bout goin' clean through college."

"I hope Callaway will not give you any more

trouble, Bill; my friend tells me that he professes to have changed his course of life, and it may be true. Certainly I would not leave school until he gave me cause."

"I don't think 'Fessor ought ter 'a' done that, 'caze the school's fur us poor boys who never had no chance 'fore, an' Callaway kin go somewhar else; he's got money, they tell me."

"I do not suppose, Bill, that there is another school in the state where the influences are as wholesome as here, and many with whom money is no consideration will come to this pure, quiet place for the best things in life. Callaway needs such a school as this, and if he has no bad associates to keep him from reform he may become a worthy man."

"But them fellers Gaines an' Lewis 's here too."

"I did not know that; I do not understand my friend."

After seeing Mrs. Collins and the children I went back to Walesca and talked to the president of the college again.

"I have started out in the world to help it," said my friend, "and with consecration to such a service in my heart I could not refuse to take these boys. Gaines' parents are dead; his sister is a poor girl who is teaching to support herself and brother, and to educate him. She is an ambitious girl, and very worthy. Gaines has had to leave three schools, and his sister came to me in tears to beg me to admit him here. What would you have done?"

"What you did," I promptly replied.

"Well, Lewis' character has been vile; his mother is almost in her grave on account of it. She would not ask me to take him here because of the imposition upon the school, but her pastor came to me and advised me to try the boy again; he is here on probation, and knows it. Callaway's parents are wealthy and people of some influence. His father told me plainly something of his life.

He attempted to forge his father's name, and the crime was with difficulty kept from the public. He has been guilty of other offenses, and his father wants him kept from temptation for awhile."

He arose and walked across the room with a nervous tread. He looked so careworn that I was ashamed of increasing his worries.

"You are a thousand times better than I, my dear fellow, and you are right. I am unworthy to fill your place for a day. But you must have rest. Go, and leave me here."

He refused to go, however, and I found afterwards that it was on account of the three dangerous characters who had just entered school. He had taken the responsibility of having them there, and he must bear it alone; it meant personal sacrifice to him.

That afternoon I took my daughter to the grave on the mountain. We found the old man and his charge, and I left my daughter with him, so that I might not embarrass him in telling his story, and when I came back I knew he had told it.

I took Katherine to Mrs. Collins'. Bill called me aside and said:

"Mr. Ramla, you certainly is got er purty daughter."

"Katherine," I said, on our way back to Walesca, "what is your impression of the crackers?—and what hope do you see for the work?"

"Every hope, father. They are susceptible of the highest improvement. Nothing could be brighter than Bill's wit, and his peculiar originality will certainly make him prominent some day. I am confident of your entire success here, and I want to help you if you will let me."

We went the next day to see Mol. I hoped that my daughter might have a happy influence over her. The poor girl seemed subdued and looked not like herself.

"Miss Mol, I hope you have had a happy, peaceful life since I left."

"Thar ain't been much peace an' no hap'ness, Mr. Ramla."

"What is the matter, child?"

"Well, Bill an' Mr. Callaway ag'in. They don't let me have no peace; an' now they's in school t'gether. I reckon wun o' 'm 'll be kilt soon. Miss Katherine, does boys pester you?"

Katherine laughed in her girlish way, and her manner told better than her words that she had had no experience with young men.

We went to see the old maids. I had been many times since that first visit with Bill, and they always received me kindly. I was much surprised to see the old bachelor sitting in front of the door smoking.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Quinn. Miss Betsy has relented, I see, and allows you to visit her."

"Worser 'n that. Betsy, come here; Mr. Ramla's back."

Miss Betsy, looking happier than I had ever seen her, came to the door.

"This 's my wife, Mr. Ramla."

"Your wife! Miss Betsy, surely this is not true!"

"Reckin 'tis, though it 'pears mighty strange; I stop an' think sometimes what it do mean."

"Tell me, Mr. Quinn, how you won her," I said.

"But, first, Miss Betsy, I would like to speak to Miss Jane and Miss Ann."

"Ah! that's how it come 'bout, Mr. Ramla. They ain't no more."

"Why, Miss Betsy!"

"They done dead. They lef' me two month ago. Jane wus out in the field plowin', an' she wus jes' tuk suddint-like, an' drap'd off. Me an' Ann brought her ter the house, an' she had er sorter chill, an' yit 'twon't er chill. Dunno what wus the matter; she jes' drap'd off. An' thin 'bout er month arter, Ann wus tuk purty much the same, an' she drap'd off too. They never lef'

no word, an' I feel pow'ful lonesome. 'Pears ter me I'd feel pearter ef they'd tole me somethin' 'fore they went; but you dunno 'bout these things, Mr. Ramla; you dunno."

"Truly, Miss Betsy, we do not know the hows nor the whys of these things now. Some day we shall know, however, and I hope then we shall be satisfied with the knowledge."

"Well, I won't satisfied much whin they lef', an' I ain't yit, though I's better pleased. Wun evenin', while I wus sittin' here mopin' an' wonderin' what I'd do, Mr. Quinn come walkin' up, an' he looked kinder sorrowful, like he sym'thized 'ith me, an' somehow I couldn't tell him ter go off. Thin he said, 'Miss Betsy, I's been livin' by you twenty year, an' I ain't never thought it necessary to come over an' offer you no sarvice; 'peared like you could take keer o' yerself. But now Miss Jane and Miss Ann's done gone an' dead, 'peared like ter me, Miss Betsy, you orter have somebody to look arter you an' help you 'tend ter the place.' I said, 'I reckon I kin 'tend ter the place, Mr. Quinn.' 'Well, I ain't thinkin' much o' the place,' he said, 'but who's goin' ter 'tend ter you?' 'Guess I kin take keer o' myself, too; I done it fur forty year.' 'Miss Betsy,' he said, 'somebody 'll be here 'fore Sat'day night ter pester you. You'll have ter wuk all day an' sit up all night ter keep 'm from takin' yer money; an' thin, not speakin' o' the place, but kin you plow an' hoe an' plant an' gether corn an' pick cotton an' cut grass an' go ter mill an' feed the steer an' cook an' go ter town an' wash an' sell the craps, an' all by yerself? It's er mighty big thing ter take keer o' er big place like this all by yerself.' 'Well, I know that, Mr. Quinn,' I said; 'ain't I been helpin' take keer o' it long 'nough ter know it's er big thing? But what you 'spect me ter do? I don't mean ter sell none o' it, an' I don't 'spect ter give it 'way, an' what's more I ain't a-goin' ter employ nobody ter come here an' waste what me an' Jane an' Ann work'd so hard fur.

No use ter bother talkin' 'bout it.' 'Miss Betsy,' he said, kinder stammerin'-like, 'I'd come over an' help you fur nothin', an' I wouldn't waste nothin' neither.' 'That's very kind, Mr. Quinn,' I said, 'but I don't want nobody ter do nothin' fur me 'thout I pays 'em. Besides, you ain't never had no 'sperience farmin'. What you know 'bout it? You been over yonder pickin' blackberries all yer life, an' you never see craps growin' 'thout you come ter the fence an' see mine.' 'Miss Betsy, thar's some things folks can't have no 'sperience 'bout. I ain't much o' er farmer, it's so, an' it's necessary fur good craps; but kin' er man have 'sperience takin' keer o' er wife 'fore he marries the fust time? I think he kin do 'bout as well 'thout 't 's 'ith it; least-wise most wimmen folks 'd ruther have er bachelor 'n er widower. Now, Miss Betsy, jes try me, an' I'll make the bes' husband you ever seed.' 'Ef that's what you come fur you'd better go home,' I said; but the ole man got down on his rheumatic knees, an' he begged so hard I didn't think I orter treat him bad, so I said, 'Ef you think you kin be enny help ter me (I'm practical like), I'll take pity on you Mr. Quinn, an' we'll marry, I reckon'."

"Till him what I did thin, Betsy," said her husband.

"You made er goose o' yerself."

"Law! I didn't think geese like ter kiss; but Betsy's allus teachin' me somethin', Mr. Ramla," the old man said.

His wife blushed. "You need ter be taught er lot o' things. He ain't much help ter me. Well, he wus so 'fraid I'd back out he went over an' got the preacher the nex' day, an' we wus wed. Come in, you an' your darter, an' rest er bit. I clean furgot you wus standin' all this time. My old man makes me 'most furgit myself sometimes. But I's tole you 'nough 'bout him."

"Thar's wun thing you ain't tole him, Betsy, an' that is you wus mighty glad ter git me."

CHAPTER XVIII.

We left the happy pair. Mr Quinn walked with us to the gate.

"I can't help Betsy much, you know; rheumatiz 's too bad, but I kin 'vise her 'bout the place; I kin take keer o't whin she's gone, an' help her whin she's here; an' I tell you it's better'n pickin' berries an' bein' all by yerself. Mr. Ramla, thar ain't nothin' like havin' er companion, 'specially sech er businesslike companion 's Betsy."

We finished the round of visits. Katherine was delighted. It was new to her, and she could even be amused by the ignorance of the crackers, while I was pained. She became more serious afterward and was the greatest help to me.

Katherine entered school in the sophomore class. Callaway, Gaines and Lewis were all in the freshman class. They gave no trouble, my friend told me. Bill became accustomed to their presence and all went on smoothly. But Katherine one day said to me:

"Father, I wish those boys were not in school; I believe they are deceiving the president, and he is too good a man to suffer in this way."

I asked if she knew any way in which they had deceived him. She said no, it was more an impression on her part than actual knowledge; other students shared the impression, however. I told her that they had been somewhat dissipated, and I supposed that was why everyone suspected them.

"I did not know they had been wild," she replied.

She had little time for visiting with me now. But sometimes on Saturdays she had permission to go with

me, and was a wonderful help. People learned to know and to love her. They expected her every Saturday and always complained if she was not with me.

"Katherine," I said, "you are doing more good than I;" but she only laughed.

I thought she might persuade Mol to enter school, but Mol was very hard to influence. She loved Katherine, though, and liked to be with her. She told her all her troubles with Bill and Callaway, and really gave a reasonable excuse for not entering school:

"You see, I'd be thar all the time, and Mr. Callaway an' Bill 'd sure have er fuss. 'Twouldn't be good fur us, an' 'twouldn't be good fur the school."

Katherine told her that she was wrong to care at all for Callaway, but she only said:

"I ain't never said I did," and would not commit herself.

Bill was progressing with his studies. He had entered the preparatory department and the corps of cadets. He was very proud of his uniform and military training. Cadets were required to salute members of the faculty at thirty paces, and Bill was so careful in the exercise of this courtesy that hardly one of the faculty but would walk sixty paces off to keep from constantly making the salute. Bill would invariably, however, walk thirty paces to meet them.

One day he went to Canton, Georgia, and met one of his acquaintances on the street.

"Good morning, Bill," the friend said.

Bill gave the military salute. The friend thought it strange that he did not speak, and took no notice of the salute. He met Bill again and the same thing occurred. He met him the third time and said:

"Look here, Bill Collins. I have met you three times to-day and said good morning each time, and you haven't spoken yet. What's the matter with you?"

"Didn't you see me do this?" said Bill, making the salute.

"Yes."

"Well, that means good mornin' at Warlesky; I thought you Canton folks had some sense."

One day Bill said to me:

"Let's walk out on the mountain; here's where I fust met you, an' here's whar I's always settled things fur good. I've been thinkin' lately, Mr. Ramla—doin' er pow'ful lot er thinkin'—an' I 'bout come ter the conclusion that I ain't what I thought I wus."

"What do you mean, Bill?"

"Well, the smartest man in this country. Plenty folks 's got more sense 'n me, an' I's worried 'bout myself. I's been goin' 'bout the country thinkin' I wus the smartest man in it, an' boastin' 'bout what I know'd. I acted like er goose whin I spoke at commencement last year, an' 'Fessor was so patient like an' good ter me. 'Fessor gits up ever' day or two an' tells us how everywun o' us orter bless the world, an' how we kin do it. I'd jes like ter know how I kin bless the world. I's lived twenty-two years, an' I ain't never done nothin' fur it yet. I didn't use ter pay no 'tention ter 'Fessor whin he talked that way, but I's been thinkin' lately 'bout what he's doin' an' you, Mr. Ramla, an' I don't see no hope fur me ter never do nothin'; I ain't fittin'. I l'arn purty well, they sey. 'Fessor seys thar never wus no boy here but me who went from the alphabet ter the preparatory department in er year, an' he's got great hopes o' me; but I think he jes' seys 't 'caze he's so kind an' can't help frum makin' people feel good, an' 'caze he's so b'lievin' he thinks good o' ever'body; an' thin he's so hopeful-like he's allus thinkin' thar ain't nothin' but good comin'. I really think 'Fessor 'd be s'prised ef we didn't all git ter heaven. Now, I want you ter tell me how I kin be er better boy an' how I kin bless the world."

"Have you forgotten what you said to me coming home from the moonshiner's when his child was sick?"

"Naw, I ain't furgot that; an' I want ter be unselfish an' do things fur folks, but what kin I do? I ain't fit ter do nothin'."

"Your principle then was right. Self-sacrifice is the basis of all help we may render the world. We can give the world nothing but ourselves. But before we can do this we must make the self a worthy gift—have something to sacrifice. Your condition is much better now than when I talked to you last."

And I outlined to him the life that he should live, according to my interpretation of life, and the specific work I thought he should do.

Bill fully realized his condition and the condition of his people, and determined not only to make a man of himself, but to lift his class from their miserable condition to a higher life.

"'Twouldn't seem right, you see, Mr. Ramla, fur me ter rise above my folks, they must come 'long too."

He went with me the next Saturday to see a number whom we had seen many times before, and who had always refused to consider the possibilities of their lives.

Bill said to one: "John, you dunno nothin' 'bout life; I don't know nothin' yit, but I's l'arnin', you see, an' that's the only dif'rence between you an' me. You'd better come 'long an' l'arn, too."

"Bill Collins, you needn't come preachin' ter me like you had enny right ter, like you's better'n other folks. Ain't I been loafin' 'ith you all my life, an' ain't I beat you in meny er race, an' ain't folks sed I wus the bes' man o' us two in er fight, an' ain't I sold more splinters 'n you, an' got more money, an' chawed more t'bacco? an' thin you come tryin' ter teach me.—Git 'way, boy."

"You rascal, naw, 'tain't so," said Bill; "ever'body knows I's been the bes' man all the time, an' ef you want ter prove it now, jes' git out in the road."

"Easy," said the boy: "I never sed 'twus so. I axed you, *ain't* what I said so. Don't you *know* it?"

"Naw," said Bill, "I *don't* know 'tis so."

"Thin, you dunno all that stuff you's tellin' me 'bout your l'arnin' an' I orter l'arn is so. 'Tain't been proved. I don't see no dif'rence in you; you jes' 's

ready ter fight 's you uster wus, an' it don't 'pear ter me that folks that don't hold their temper tight 's goin' ter do much fur the world; an' the leetle bit er spellin' an' readin' you kin do ain't a-goin' ter help it; it kin git 'long jes' 's well 'thout it. But I jes' wanted ter see ef you really is changed, an' I know'd the bes' thing ter git you on wus er fight. You's er better man 'n me, Bill, an' allus wus."

Poor Bill!

"That's the way 'tis, Mr. Ramla; I tole you I couldn't do nothin', 'caze I *ain't* nothin'."

I tried to reassure him, and told him of the failures that come to every life before it is strong and firm and fixed. But he was easily disheartened.

"John, you's right; I ain't changed 's much 's I thought I had, but the nex' time you see me you's goin' ter see er dif'rent boy, an' the nex' time I speak ter you you'll think you orter hear me."

And Bill went home, somewhat gloomy, but hopeful.

I went to see some of the gold-washers, and Mr. Sims had decided to send one of his children to school.

"I'll jes' try wun o' 'm an' see how 't wuks an' ef 't do all right I'll send t'others."

CHAPTER XIX.

On my way home I sat down to rest and to think over the work that had been accomplished among the crackers. While I sat thus, I heard voices, and recognized those of Callaway and Lewis.

"Lewis, I have done pretty well I think. I have been here three months this time and haven't been caught. I have done nothing really bad, though; breaking a little rule now and then amounts to nothing, and a fellow can't be bound down so tight. But, honestly, I am surprised at myself; I never was as good before. Professor is so good himself, and he talks so sometimes that I almost feel like being a Christian."

"Callaway you talk like a girl; it doesn't effect me so."

Lewis was worse than Callaway; this was a revelation to me.

"Professor is a good man, Callaway, but what of this other fellow that is living among the crackers?"

"I have my doubts about him. He pries into other people's affairs too much; somebody else has doubts about him too. A man has been watching him ever since he has been here, and if he doesn't mind he'll be trapped yet. Let's find out who the watchman is; I'd give a lot to know; he might watch us some day. Ramla generally comes here in the afternoon, and this man is always about when he is here. He must be paid for his job, because he loses a lot of time. Suppose we sit down a while and wait for the two;" and they sat very near me on an old log.

I went to where they were sitting, and spoke to them pleasantly, as if I had heard nothing.

"We are resting from the hunt, Mr. Ramla. Professor gave us permission to hunt to-day, and we have had fine success," said Callaway, holding up a dozen partridges. "How long have you been on the mountain?"

"An hour or more," I said; and he flushed.

I asked them about their progress in school, and they spoke with interest of their studies, and kindly of the president of the school. I was glad they did so, and sorry that they did not like me. I was ashamed of not having won their confidence; it was my fault; I had not trusted them. Confidence begets confidence, and nothing is such a lever in lifting a soul as simple trust in it. How often had I heard my friend say, "Boys, I trust you; I do not believe that you will do this evil."

I talked to these young men a long while, and tried to redeem the past. In my effort I forgot the watchman, and I think they did too. But after a while, guided by a slight sound, we all looked in one direction, and the tall, gaunt figure was crossing the mountain and coming towards us.

"Do you know that man, Mr. Ramla?" asked Lewis.

"No; I have seen him here often and spoken to him, but I do not know him."

"I think he is watching you," said Callaway. "I have seen him a number of times, always when you have been here. Aren't you afraid of him?"

"If he is really watching me, I am not; I fear those who know least about me more than those who know me most, because if in my life there is some evil, I trust there is some good also."

They both looked guilty, though what I stated was a general truth, as applicable to all as to me.

The strange man passed us and said, gruffly, "Good evening."

The boys saw a covey of birds just then and left me. I sat watching the result. They killed two or three partridges, and then turned toward the path the man

had taken. They followed close, tracking him to his home. The man turned several times, and they darted behind trees or by the side of rocks. I was going to call them and stop the chase, when the man turned squarely, caught them watching him, and fired. They both ran, but were unhurt. Then the man came back to meet me.

"Look here, stranger; you tell the president of Reinhardt College that if he does not look after the young scamps he has there, they will get killed some of these days. I don't care about being known just now, and I am too much engaged in other work to stop for a courtroom scene, or I would have shot those boys this morning. And let me tell *you*, beware of them; they are the worst young rascals I ever saw. I think one of them is engaged now in and about as bad a traffic as a man can be engaged in."

"I think they are reforming," I said.

"Their history in reform is relapse," he replied. "They have reformed before."

"Trust them this time," I said. "I think the trouble will be cured under the wholesome influences of the college."

"They are unworthy of your confidence," he replied.

I told my friend what had happened. He expressed regret that the boys were so foolish as to follow the man, but said:

"They meant no harm. I had rather trust the boys than the man who has hounded you. There is something doubtful about him, I am sure. I would have said so before, but hated to alarm you. Suppose we get a detective to find him out."

"Upon the principle that it takes a thief to catch a thief? I think *he* is a detective."

"Oh! he is simply watching you for personal interests. He is no employed detective."

"Yes, I think he is an employed detective," I

replied. "But employed or not, he could make a fortune in the business, and you had better take his advice and keep even closer watch over your three young scamps than you have done."

"Scamps! You have even fallen in love with the speech of your watchman."

"No, old fellow. I have more confidence in Lewis, Gaines and Callaway than I had when they entered school this term, but I still think they are doubtful. It would be easy to go back to their old habits."

"As easy as for Bill to go back to his old life and his ignorance."

"Yes," I said; and related the occurrence between Bill and the boy he was trying to persuade to come to school. We both laughed.

"One would think that you were trying to reclaim crackers and I criminals," he said; "we are like children, each contending for his own, when both have the interests of all at heart."

* * * * *

Bill was more hopeful of himself the next day.

"I think mebbe I'll do all right arter while, Mr. Ramla. Now, I tell you, I believe I kin do somethin' by goin' ter see Mol; I 'spects she thinks I have lef' her fur good this time, I ain't been thar fur so long. But I don't believe I'll ever love no gal but Mol; an' she's worth bein' true ter. Enny other gal'd run er way an' married Callaway 'fore now, but I don't think she keers much fur him, though she don't keer much fur me neither."

"Yon suppose Callaway has ever asked her to run away and marry him?" I asked.

"Mol said he had three times," he answered.

Mol was stronger than I thought. Few girls in her condition could have resisted this.

Bill went and told me the result of his visit the next morning.

“I went in same ’s I allus has, an’ Mol, ’stead o’ meetin’ me like she useter, sent word by her mother that she’d jes’ come back frum town, an’ wus tired, an’ would I please ’scuse her. Did you ever hear o’ folks doin’ that er way, Mr. Ramla? I never did, an’ I tole her mother I didn’t reckon I’d tire her no more’n she wus, an’ ter please see me ennyhow, ’caze I was on very important bizness. Mol come out thin. ‘I’d like ter know what important bizness you’s got ’ith me, Bill Collins. You ain’t been ter see me fur so long, don’t ’pear like you could have no bizness ’ith me now.’ ‘That’s why it’s important, Mol, ’caze I ain’t been fur so long I wus ’fraid you’d furgit me; an’ I don’t want you ter furgit me, Mol, whether you love me enny more or not. You musn’t furgit the old times and Bill Collins, an’ how much he allus will love you.’ Her mother wus in the other room, an’ she heard me, an’ she jes’ cried out, an’ thin Mol looked kinder-like she felt bad, too, an’ I saw tears in her eyes. ‘Mol, now don’t cry, but jes’ tell me you love me like you did wunst, an’ I’ll be jes’ as happy ’s I usedter, an’ you will, too; an’ we’ll go out on the mountain an’ gether flowers, an’ talk an’ plan what we goin’ ter do; an’ thar won’t nothin’ else come between us. An’ you’ll go ter school an’ l’arn, too; an’ I’ll help you, ’caze I’s er leetle further than you, an’ I’ll git through er year ahead o’ you; an’ I’ll go off an’ find somethin’ to do that last year you’re in school, an’ I’ll come back whin you graduate, an’ we’ll marry an’ live so peaceable an’ happy. Mol, I think folks ought ter live fur good ter the world, an’ we’ll see how much we kin do, won’t we, Mol?’ ‘Well, I thought ’t wus time you wus axin’ that,’ she said, ‘bein’ ’s how you’s countin’ me ’n all your calc’lations.’ ‘Of course, Mol, it’s fur you ter sey, an’ that’s what I ax you now.’ ‘Naw, Bill; sometimes I think I’ll love you like I useter, but you don’t consider me; you wants me ter go ter school, an’ I can’t go over yonder whar you an’ Mr. Callaway is; wun o’ you’d kill the other, I know. An’ thar ain’t

nowhar else here fur me ter go.' 'Well, I don't think you need bother 'bout me an' Callaway bein' thar long t'gether, 'caze he's goin' ter do somethin' soon ter keep him frum stayin' thar.' 'It's no use ter talk that way, Bill; Mr. Callaway ain't no more liable ter do nothin' wrong 'n you or no other boy. But that's wun thing why I didn't want ter see you this evenin', 'caze we always fuss 'bout Mr. Callaway, an' thar ain't no use in it.' 'Mol, you're the only gal I ever would er come back ter, an' I think you might consider me. Talkin' 'bout I don't consider you, you don't pay no 'tention 'tall ter me. I will promise you two things now, Mol, without you axing 'm: I won't 'buse Callaway no more, an' I won't fuss with him if you'll come to school. That's as fair as you can want.' 'That's mighty fair, Bill; I doubt ef Mr. Callaway 'd do that fur you. But you couldn't hold out, I know you couldn't.' I told her I could. But 'tain't no use ter try ter argue with Mol wun way once she's made up her mind 'tother way. So I told her all right, ennything she said. She kinder softened at that, an' sed she had loved me mighty well, an' she certainly did feel bad not to do what I wanted her—didn't seem natural, she said, but she wus the gal and she thought I orter sometimes do what she said, whin 'twon't possible fur her ter do my way, 'specially 's I wus more anxious ter marry than she wus. 'Well, Mol, tell me your way, an' I'll try ter do it.' 'Thar ain't but wun thing—stop school an' let's git married this winter; thin thar won't be no more botherin.' 'That looks kinder like you wus more anxious to marry 'n me; but I wish I could do it, Mol; I can't, though.' She got mad thin an' sed she won't more anxious ter marry 'n me, that she never come ter talk ter me 'bout it, but ef we wus ever goin' ter marry, she thought we'd better now, an' not be pesterin' no more. She was willin' not ter marry an' not ter say nothin' more 'bout it, but she won't willin' ter be worried four or five years like we wus thin. I tole

her I understood her, that she could do 'thout me er heap better'n I could 'thout her, an' that I wus talkin' jes' for fun whin I said she wanted ter marry the most. 'But, Mol,' I sed, 'I can't stop school; you don't understand', 'caze you ain't tried it, an' that's what hurts me. You thinks I's treatin' you mean 'caze I won't stop.' It's mighty hard, Mr. Ramla, ter love er gal so an' have her feel that way, an' can't explain it ter her; it's mighty hard."

I knew it was.

"But 'twon't no use stayin', an' I lef' an' just tole her, 'Mol, I won't come back no more; but remember, I allus will love you better'n enny gal in the world.' 'Allus will?' she asked 'Yes, allus.' Mrs. Smith followed me whin I left an' sed, 'Bill, won't she love you?' an' I said, 'I don't know; Mol is mighty queer.' "

The next afternoon Mrs. Smith came to Walesca; she brought me a note. "Thar wus three," she said, "'an' this 's wun; she's gone, I dunno whar."

"Mol gone?" I asked.

"Yes, she's gone." Her face was hard and pinched with her sorrow.

"See what she says ter you," she said.

The note was written by some one else, of course:

MR. RAMLA,

I am going, and it's for good; persuade mam so, and Bill too. It's a heap better for us all; I know you'd think so if I could tell you why. Tell Bill not to think too hard of me, and go to see mam and talk to her an' keep her in good spirits. Tell her I will come back some day. I thank you for being good to me. Your friend,

MOL SMITH.

"She writ er note ter me; I got 'Fessor ter read it, an' it's 'bout the same as your'n. I dunno what ter make o' Mol. She lef' wun fur Bill too, but I ain't give it ter him yit. I hate ter hurt the poor feller."

Bill came for me to go home with him, and she gave him the note. It was shorter than mine.

BILL:

I always liked you best. Trust me; I'm going for good. Comfort mother.

MOL.

"I drove her away," he said, "I know I did, and she wouldn't say so; I kept her worried so about Callaway."

"She never thought much o' me," said the mother, "ter leave me alone an' all the wuk ter do. I didn't think it o' Mol."

"She's gone fur good, Mrs. Smith," Bill said. "I know it's mighty hard on you, but I'll come ever' day after school and help you like I help mam."

I did not know what to think of it. If Callaway had not been in school, I should have thought that Mol had run off with him. I had some faint suspicion that he would follow her in a day or two. But days and weeks passed and Callaway remained. He seemed as distressed over Mol's leaving as anyone else, though he was not as gloomy as Bill. It was the one good thing in Callaway's character that he really seemed to care for Mol. I did not believe it until she left, but he certainly showed strong evidence of affection then.

We heard nothing from Mol for some time, and had ceased to expect news, when one day a letter came to her mother. I contained little news, however, only, "I'm well; I wish I could hear from you, but I cannot let you know where I am. I hear indirectly, however, and that is better than not at all. I send you two dollars." She was evidently working, and it was good of her to help her mother. Mrs. Smith, however, was more discontented than ever.

"I'd er heap ruther have Mol than the two dollars."

I went to see her often, and tried to comfort her. At first she distrusted Mol.

"Enny gal that'd run off an' leave her mam whin she's the onliest child, I don't know what ter think o' her; an' enny gal that'd ruther go off an' make money wukin' 'n ter stay 't home an' help her mam, I don't know 'bout it. I'm afraid she's married to some rascal an' won't let me know it."

But after awhile she seemed to be satisfied that Mol

had some object in view. I could not help thinking this, too. Mol was a fine girl in many respects, and, after the fear that she had run away to marry Callaway had passed, I could not but feel that she had a work to accomplish which she thought best to keep from the knowledge of her friends just then.

CHAPTER XX.

For some time I had been wondering what was the nefarious business that Callaway and Lewis were supposed by the strange man to be engaged in. One of them was connected doubtless with a blind tiger. They both drank, I was sure, though my friend did not believe it. Finally I determined to brave the danger of the stills again and discover whether Lewis and Callaway had any dealings with the whiskey men. I suspected that they were paid to bring whiskey to the school and sell it to the boys. Two or three boys had been before the faculty lately for drinking. To go the round of all the stills would take about a week.

One evening I started out alone, not willing to endanger Bill's life again. I told my daughter not to expect me home that night, but I did not tell her or anyone else where I was going. Along the same roads, by the same by-paths, as on that memorable night with Bill, I went, ostensibly, should I meet anyone, on an opossum hunt. I did not meet a soul. To one still and another I crept, but I saw no sign of the three boys, and heard no sound but that of the night bird and the moonshiners running the stills.

I came home just before day, and, as it was best not to go two nights in succession, I rested on the morrow and the following night, and went the next night. In this way I was out seven nights in two weeks, and made the rounds of the stills without harm and without any great danger that was apparent to me. No discovery was made. All that I found I knew before. But I felt better satisfied with myself because of the effort; and a hope came to me that the boys were not connected with

the liquor traffic. Still I was not fully satisfied; my fear was that the strange man would discover that they were connected with the stills, and expose them.

A few days later I went to see my friend, and told him what I had done, and that I felt more hopeful of the boys.

"The tables are turning," he said; "you are growing more hopeful and I less so. I feel sure that they do sell liquor to the schoolboys, and I suspect Lewis of another guilt."

"What next?" I asked.

"Well, a storekeeper down here showed me this the other day," handing me a coin, "and said he was sure Lewis had passed it."

It was a counterfeit piece.

"To-day," he continued, "he told me that Lewis again tried to pass counterfeit money, and when told of it, seemed much surprised and said it had been passed upon him. This afternoon he paid his tuition fee and gave me this."

He handed me a fifty-cent piece that was well counterfeited.

"So there is a counterfeiter's den somewhere in this country," said I. "Truly there are many hindrances to our work."

"Yes, there are many, and they can be uprooted only by degrees. But let's carry the work forward as far as possible, and not grow faint-hearted because we do not now see the end."

"What will you do with these boys, especially Lewis?" I asked.

"I will keep them all here under the moral influence of the school until I am sure whether or not they are in this business of selling liquor and handling counterfeit money. I will send for Lewis now, though, and question him. Watch his expression closely."

Lewis came in.

"Mr. Lewis, are you a judge of counterfeit coin?" the president asked, handing him the fifty-cent piece.

"No, sir, I do not profess to be a judge of it. I thought I knew it well enough not to allow anyone to pass it off on me, but I was mistaken. Two or three of these rascally crackers have passed it off on me lately."

"Indeed! I am sorry that you have been so deceived. You should notice closely when money is given you. You gave me this counterfeit piece for tuition this afternoon. Please make it good now."

Lewis gave him fifty cents and put the counterfeit coin in his pocket. "I will be more careful, sir. I am sorry this has occurred."

"Yes, I also am sorry. Stay, Mr. Lewis," as Lewis started to leave; "with whom have you had money dealings recently? I did not know that you boys handled much money. There is no need of it here."

Lewis' face turned very red and then very pale. "I deal at the store."

"Yes, but the storekeeper is an honest man and would not pass counterfeit money. If it is passed off upon him, and in the hurry of making change he does not discover it at once, he has the money taken in during the day all tested at night, and never gives counterfeit money in change."

"Of course I did not mean that he had given me change in counterfeit money. You asked me where I dealt, and I told you. Besides my dealings at the store, I buy splinters for kindling from Bill Collins, wood from Ben Jones, and now and then I sell clothes to negroes."

I felt like resenting the charge upon Bill, but the matter was, of course, in the president's hands.

"It is strange; I deal with both Bill and the wood-vender, and they have never tried to pass counterfeit money upon me, and I am sure they would not willingly handle it at all."

"Then you mean to charge me?" Lewis asked excitedly.

"Not at all, Mr. Lewis. I have only made a plain statement about Bill and the wood-seller. If you feel that you have been charged, it is a personal matter with you, sir."

"The inference seems to be that you charge me, Professor."

"Don't be too ready to draw conclusions, Mr. Lewis. The readiness with which one does this is self-condemning sometimes. I do not accuse you, but I advise you to be more careful about handling counterfeit money. Don't allow it to be passed off on you. You may retire."

Lewis withdrew, and my friend smiled.

"Easily caught, though the evidence would not be sufficient in law. But I took note of the date and every peculiar mark upon the coin I returned to him. I shall know if he tries to pass it again."

Then with a troubled air, he arose and began walking up and down the room.

"To think of a young boy being engaged in such work! To think of his fate if he keeps on! To think of the loss of a soul to itself, to the world, to God! It is horrible!"

That night the revenue officer who had been wounded and who had wounded McCabe came.

"I have just heard of the whereabouts of McCabe," he said, "and must find him. He is hiding in the mountains near here."

"Are you not afraid? He made a vow of revenge upon you for wounding him, you remember?" I said.

"I have no fear. He is not expecting me, and I am better prepared for desperate fighting. I think I can put the handcuffs on without a struggle."

He went out that night and destroyed a blind still, but returned without McCabe. He had seen no trace of him. He would ride some distance in another direction that day, he said, and capture him the next night. I rode with him as far as the top of Pine Log Mountain.

I watched him ride down the mountain, looking so brave and strong. Just then I heard a whizzing sound, then an explosion, and saw him reel and fall from his horse. I looked to where the sound came from, and saw a man running through the bushes. He was some distance off, but I saw he was tall and looked much like the strange man of the mountain. Can it be McCabe? I thought. Or can the man who saved my life from the snow, and who seemed to have a kind heart, have done this murderous deed? It would have been useless to attempt to capture him. He was too far off, and running, and my horse could not have made any headway in the bush.

I went to the officer; he was dead. I took him to Bill's home, and that afternoon we carried him to Walesca.

CHAPTER XXI.

A number of men went out to look for McCabe. They finally captured him in a little cabin on the mountain, asleep. He was taken to Atlanta and lodged in jail, there to await his trial.

Life went on peacefully at Walesca for a while. Lewis passed no more counterfeit money. Occasionally still, though, a boy was called before the faculty for drinking, and no one knew where he got his whiskey; none of them would tell, and we could not find out.

Katherine had influenced two or three girls to attend school, and they seemed to be doing well. A Young Women's Christian Association had been organized, and Katherine was a leading member. I felt proud of my daughter. She had too much to do, though, I feared, with her school work, her home work, and her labors for the people. Still, she never spoke of being tired, and was as cheery and bright as a young life can be. The president often asked her to aid him in his many offices, and he told me she relieved him much. I feared sometimes she was associated with him too much for her heart's good. My friend was a man who did not think of loving any woman. He was not ready to think of it. With him love meant marriage, and he was not ready to marry. I noticed Katherine's being pleased when she could help him, and I did not like it. Ah! a young girl's heart is tender and loving. If you would not have her love you, be not near her. She cares for you long before you tell her that you care for her, and does it as innocently as a baby loves its mother. She perhaps does not know it, and would not believe it if you told her, but it is true.

I told my friend I was afraid Katherine's health would give way; I thought she had better have less to do, and asked him to be as lenient in class as possible. It was a delicate matter; I could not say more. I hoped he would understand, but he seemed wonderfully obtuse; or maybe it was my own solicitude that made the matter so plain to me.

"Katherine," I said, one day, "you are tired. Let me copy that paper for the professor;" but she only said:

"You are more tired than I," and kept on writing.

I could not of course tell her what I thought, so let the matter go on as it was.

Katherine and I went occasionally to see the old man whose charge was a lonely grave. We met his sweetheart's mother at his home. Have I not spoken of her before? She was a good old woman; grief had hallowed her life, until she seemed not like the other cracker women. She said to me one day, when I was there alone:

"Mr. Ramla, you've got er mighty nice child fur yer darter. She makes me think o' leetle May; her ways 's so mild an' lovin'. She thinks 'bout folks, too, an' 's allus doin' somethin' fur somebody, an' she don't seem ter know she's doin' folks good no more'n ef she wurn't. She's er powerful sweet gal an' jes' 's peart 's she kin be. Don't she do mighty well in school?—But lemme tell you, Mr. Ramla, Katy's in love, an' I don't think it's good fur her now 'fore she gits through l'arnin'. I wouldn't ax her 'bout it, 'caze 't might make her think too much, but I know 'tis so; an' men folks don't giner'ly know sech things well, an' I thought I'd tell you, 'caze her mother ain't here."

I thanked her, and asked her whom she thought my daughter cared for.

"I dunno. You see, I don't never go nowhar, an' don't see the child with nobody but you whin you comes here."

I thought I knew, and determined to save her as

many heart-throbs as I could. "It is a light thing for a girl to love," you say. "They all love, and it never amounts to anything." You are wrong. It ruins the life of many a one. I feared Katherine was like me, and would never love but once. Happy if her choice was happy, miserable if not. A man who wins the heart of such a girl without a fair exchange, is not only a thief, but a murderer. I blamed not my friend in this case; he did not know that he had won Katherine; nor did he know that his qualities were such that few women could resist them.

I went immediately to see him.

"I am going to stop Katherine from school for a while," I said. "McCabe's trial will soon come off, and I shall have to attend that; so I will take her home to stay while I am gone."

"And do you think we could not take care of her for that short time?" he asked.

"You draw inferences too readily. I think she will be well taken care of here, but it is best to take her home for awhile."

"She is your child, of course; but as president of the school in which she is a student, I advise you not to take her away now. We hold examinations soon; you want her to stand them; she is doing well in her classes, and I think you will be doing her an injustice. You must not take her," he said, almost angrily; and, frowning, he arose and went to the window.

"She is very tired; you do not see it, but I do. She needs rest. Health is more than culture. Besides, she has plenty of time to learn."

"Do you not know," he said, "that you are mortifying the child's ambition. She is leading her classes, and would necessarily fall behind them by leaving, and, as to the work, she would have to work much harder to catch up afterwards than she does now to lead."

"That may be all true, but Katherine must go with me home and remain there until I return. Perhaps it may be better for her not to come back at all."

"Something has happened to cause you to come to this rash determination."

"Again you draw inferences too readily," I said, rising to leave.

"But there has, and by virtue of our long friendship I beg you to tell me what it is. I say that, because it may not be connected with the school. If it is, I have a right to know, and to *demand* that you tell me."

He had arisen, and was standing between me and the door. He was more angry than I had ever seen him. I grew angry, too. No right of friendship could justify his acting thus with reference to a private matter.

"I do not answer all demands," I replied haughtily.

"If you do not answer just ones, I need not argue with you or plead for Miss Katherine's interests. A man who will not be just to a friend may not be to his daughter."

"I think, sir, I am the best judge of my daughter's interests, and, in order to be just to her, I must take her from this place. As to our friendship, for its continuance I beg that you will say nothing else."

"Sir, I have the guardianship of this school and of every student in it, and I have a right to demand what has happened to render it just to your daughter to take her home."

"Don't speak of *demands*. The term is too strong. I will say to you this, though, that the matter I refer to is nothing you can help, and this relieves me of the necessity of telling you."

"I made provision for this when I asked that if it were not connected with the school you would tell me—for friendship's sake."

"Friendship claims too much in this case. There are things I would not tell my best friend, and these are the things that I would not tell you."

"Then friendship is worth nothing and I care no longer for it."

"If you care no longer for mine, the matter shall be mutual."

"As you will. *You* are controlling the evening." He turned from me, and I left.

I felt sadder that evening than I had done for years. My friend I had known from his infancy. I was much older than he, but since the time of our intimate association in the work among the crackers, he had been so much stronger than I, so much more effective in the work, that I looked up to him, and should miss his wise counsel. And his comradeship—what of that? We had been companions and closer friends than men often are. I loved him and I believed he loved me.

"Katherine," I said, when I went in, "we must go home at once."

"Why, father!"

"Yes, at once. McCabe's trial takes place in ten days, and I have to be in Atlanta by that time, and you must go home. You had better pack immediately."

"Could I not stay here, father?" she asked. "I have examinations next week and I am so anxious to stand them well. Then the class will take up one or two new studies, and it would be so much better for me to begin with it."

"You may never return here to school. The studies will not matter at all."

I had not intended to be so brusque, but I was ruffled in spirit.

"Is this not a sudden determination, father?"

"Very."

"I shall miss the work so, and I think the people may miss me, too. I have tried to help you in your work, father."

"You have helped me, Katherine, more than you know, and I regret very much the necessity of your leaving, but it cannot be helped."

"Will you return, father?"

"I do not know; most likely not."

"Then what will the work do without you?"

"Very well. The president of the school can carry it on."

"But he cannot do everything, father."

"A deep crimson had painted her cheeks; she put her hands to them; the crimson indicated a burning heart. The sight made me more obdurate.

"He may miss me, but it is his own fault that I go."

"You speak bitterly, father. What has happened?"

"Nothing, except that the president of the school and I have exchanged some unkind words, and have severed the friendship of years."

"Oh, father! You do not mean this?"

"Yes, that is what is the matter. Now, ask nothing else, but be a good, obedient child, and pack your trunks at once."

I felt like a child-slayer, Katherine looked so wild and unlike herself.

"I hope you will regret this, father, and change," she said, with a little haughty turn of the head.

I cannot say how I felt, but I know of no feeling more miserable than that which follows the loss of a friend when one is largely, if not wholly to blame for the loss. There is such emptiness; all other friends cannot take the place of this one; and there is such self-reproach. And what was the necessity of it? Nothing except that I feared Katherine's life would be blighted by her love for my friend when he did not care for her. Nothing but this, did I say? Well was not this enough? But there was only *fear*, and no certainty. I did not even know that Katherine cared for my friend. I was not sure that, even if she did, it would blight her life. I did not know that he did not care for her. I would not have had "the wish father to the thought," but it had seemed to me that once or twice while he was asking why I meant to take her away, the tone of his voice and his manner, more than his words, were some indication

of affection. If it was true I was sure that he was not conscious of it, and it may have been only my fancy. I would have given almost anything to have had it so. I sat at my desk and tried to write to my friend, but there was nothing that I could say. The only thing that would satisfy him would be to state my reason for taking my daughter away, and, in delicacy, I could not do that. I wondered then, and I have wondered since, if delicacy should really have had any place in a case like this. I doubt if it should, and yet, to give up delicacy of feeling even for an instant, is like giving up a principle; it lowers the whole nature, and that should be kept strong and pure and delicate and free from compromise.

The next day Katherine spent in packing. She looked unable to do anything. She had aged two years in that one night, and I was just enough to her to know that it was not all from love of any one person. She loved the school, the students, the whole people, and the work. She had interests and friendships at Walesca. I believed that her generous heart suffered more for these than for a peculiarly personal interest.

CHAPTER XXII.

In a few days we left. I thought my friend would seek to renew the friendship, and maybe declare himself wrong, but he felt possibly as I did—that there was nothing to say. Ah! it is harder to mend than to make. Have you not heard that it is harder to make an old garment over than to make a new garment? It is true of other things than clothes.

My friend went with us to Canton. I thought I had never seen him so courtly. He talked as pleasantly and cheerily as if nothing had happened, and we said good-bye with a cordial hand-grasp.

"Miss Katherine, I shall miss you; and you, too," he said to me.

Katherine was very ill when we reached home. She looked worse than I had ever seen her look, and her mother thought I had brought her because she was ill. She had nervous prostration from overwork and the sudden change. My wife was never so angry with me.

"You do not know how to manage girls," she said. "I shall not trust Katherine with you again."

I was mortified to think that I could not take care of my own daughter.

It was necessary for me to attend McCabe's trial as a witness. I thought this trial would solve the mystery of the appearance on the mountain; I should at least find out if it was McCabe. I had been to the mountains a number of times since his arrest to see if the strange man was still there, but he did not once appear. It was with a good deal of curiosity, therefore, that I entered the court-room. McCabe was brought in. He was a tall, angular man, smooth-faced, with sandy hair and

fierce gray eyes. His appearance was very much that of the apparition, but the latter had a long, iron-gray beard, and a milder look, I thought. I could not determine whether or not the two were identical, not even when I heard McCabe's voice. It was like, and yet unlike, the voice of the watchman; as you have heard one of two brothers speak, and almost imagined that it was the other, and yet an intonation now and then would dissuade you from the imagination. During all the trial I was not able to say whether the voice was that of the apparition or not.

A great number of McCabe's relatives had come to testify. They came in wagons, eight men and seven women. The women had their work, as if they could not afford to lose a minute's time. One was making a dress, hemming a ruffle that had got tangled in the straw in the bottom of the wagon; another was making a boy's pants; a third had her knitting, and was vigorously applying the needles, reminding one of Madame Lafarge, who knitted all day by the guillotine during the dark days of Paris, and knitted in her socks the numbers of the condemned as the sharp knife moved up and down in its rapid death-strokes. Both men and women were garrulous and excited. Many a threat was uttered, and boasts without number.

"Bud kilt the man; course he did; been tryin' fur er year ter do that, but we're goin' ter git him out; jes' you wait an' see. Mac'll rule this' country ag'in, sure's you're born; ketch him gittin hung; ropes weren't made fur Mac. Ain't he kilt three men 'fore now?"

"Thar ain't nobody a-goin' ter sw'ar ag'in' him; they'se afeard."

McCabe's sister was in one of the wagons.

"I dunno, but I 'spect they'll have purty much to say ag'in' him this time, 'caze they'll think fur sure he'll swing;" and she began crying and groaning.

"Never you mind, sister 'Phronie, Mac's got friends, an' ain't thar 'nough o' us ter keep enny man in the county from hangin'?"

They saw me, and one of the men beckoned me to him.

"I say, pard, whatever yer name is, what yer goin' ter do 'bout this case? Yer goin' ter testify ag'in' the bully o' the mountains? Better mind. I tell yer fur yer own good."

"McCabe's er desp'rate feller, an' he don't spare no enemy. Never mind 'bout yer been helpin' folks here. He don't keer nothin' fur that. We're goin' ter git him free 'thout yer testimony; I jes' tell yer fur yer own sake.—But say, now, I'll give yer er cow nex' fall and feed her all the winter fur you ef you won't say nothin' ag'in' him."

"I can only say what I know, regardless of whether it is for or against McCabe," I answered.

"And yer don't want the cow? Better not ef yer talk fur hangin' Mac, 'caze yer won't need her. I don't reckon they drink hot milk," pointing down.

McCabe's wife was in the party, but she was more quiet than the rest.

The evidence for the people tended strongly to show that McCabe was guilty. One man testified that McCabe had written the notice that the revenue officer had seen eighteen months before tacked on a tree. Another testified that he had seen McCabe remove the bullet with which the revenue officer had wounded him, and had heard his vow that the same bullet should end the officer's life. One witness said that he had several times met McCabe in the mountains and been asked by him if he had seen "that miserable revenue officer." "I would come ter light an' be tried fur plottin' ter kill er revenue officer; I could easy clear myself, but I'm hidin' out ter get er chance at the man who 'tempted ter kill me; I'll kill him ef it's the las' thing I do." He kept the battered bullet with which he had been shot, carefully preserved in a little bag, in his inside pocket.

Three other witnesses testified that they had met McCabe the day of the shooting, and that he had said,

"I'll git him ter-day, boys; he's comin' this way." After leaving McCabe they had started back to Walesca to warn the officer, but passed while the officer and I were on the mountain talking, and so missed him. The witnesses were all asked why they did not inform the sheriff of McCabe's whereabouts, as a warrant had been issued for his arrest when the other moonshiners were prosecuted. For two reasons, they said: McCabe was in the mountains, everybody supposed that; the sheriff was as sure of it as they were. But he could never have been found. After seeing him, if they had gone immediately to Walesca, he would have gone to a distant point by the time the officers could have begun a search for him, so it was no use to tell. The second reason was that they feared McCabe. It was well known that he thought nothing of killing anyone who interfered with him at all.

I could only testify that I had seen the death of the officer and the man who had evidently fired the shot, making his escape. I had seen only his back, but the height and form of the man corresponded to McCabe's.

The testimony for the defense was unique. The first witness was McCabe's sister. "Do you know the prisoner?" "Think I do; leastwise I know'd him 'fore he wus er prisoner." "How long have you known him?" "Well, ef that ain't pert in you! Is that yer bizness?" "Come to order, woman. How long have you known the prisoner?" "Well, ef you mus' know, we wus fotched up in the same house, an' I think it's been now thirty year; ax him; it mought 'a' been longer." "Don't you know how old you are?" "Of course; I'se thirty-nine year, two months, an' thirty days old, but I don't know precisely how old Mac is. You understand?" "Is the prisoner your brother?" "You're right; he's the bes' bud goin'." "I asked if he was your brother?" "An' I said he war." "Do you know when the revenue officer shot the prisoner?" "I don't know the day—think 'twus Tuesday—naw, 'twus night.

Oh! come ter 'member now, Bud sed he never looked at his watch ter see whether 'twas 'fore twelve o'clock or arter. It wus 'bout wun whin he got home, an' he stopped on the way ter dig out the lead; an' 't didn't take him long ter git the bullet out. Bud's mighty quick at ever'thin', though it mought 'a' been We'n's-day whin he wus shot." "What year was it?" "Las' year." "What time of the year?" "I reckon it mought 'a' been fall, 'caze I had jes' come back frum town that evenin' an' throwed my shawl on the bed. 'Twas thar whin Bud come in, an' I don't wear er shawl in the summer." "Perhaps it was winter?" "Naw, I wears er cloak in the winter; 'twas fall." "Did you wear a thick dress?" "I think I did; I dunno, though. I wore my best black coat, an' it mought 'a' been lawn. My bes' dress ain't allus thick; it don't have ter be, you know; my shawl er my cloak 'll keep me warm 'thout considerin' the dress." "Do you not remember the month?" "I's gittin' tired o' talkin' 'bout time now; you git me all flustered; 'twas June." "June does not come in the fall, and people do not generally wear shawls in that month." "Nc'um! P'rhaps you ain't as old as me; I'e seen the frost kill all the fruit in June. The still bizness warn't good that year, 'caze thar warn't no fruit; an' the craps wus tetched, too." "Did your brother run a distillery?" "Stick to your p'int, man; I could ketch you in er minute; we wus talkin' 'bout June." "Well, what month was it? Do you know?" "I think 'twus October, the bes' I kin reckon it now; I'd er put 't down ef I'd know'd you wus goin' ter ax." "Did your brother keep a still?" "Yes, he kept er still, but we made no heap er money out'n it." "Do you run it now?" "I rule that question out," said the judge. "I thought you wus gittin' too personal, young man; thank you, Jedge," the woman said. "Where was the prisoner the day the revenue officer was killed?" "Can't prove 't by me. He wus in the mountains somewhar, 'cept 'bout the time that man war kilt,

an' thin he wus sittin' talkin' ter me. He says, 'Sister, I've 'bout give out shootin' that revenue man; he never hurt me much; I b'lieve I'll let him go.' 'That's jes' like you, Bud,' I said, 'ter be so forgivin'-like. I think you'd better go home, too, an' let him be. 'Taint no profit ter you ter keep watch so long.' An' 'bout that time we heard somebody come er runnin', an' Bud said he didn't know what they mought want, but I mought pertend ter git 'm what they wanted 's well 's he; and he lef', goin' purty fas'. They come an' I axed what I could do fur 'm, an' they sed, 'Git McCabe out'n the house; he's jes' kilt er revenue man;' an' I told 'm, 'Naw, he hadn't;' but they 'sisted; an' I tole 'm they could imagine what they choose, an' they come in an' looked ever'whar fur Bud, but he'd had time ter 'scape 'way off by that time, an' they followed him, but they didn't ketch him that day." "Did he come to your house any more that day, Miss McCabe?" "Naw, he never come no more." "That will do." "I'm mighty glad o' it."

The next witness was a man. "Do you know the prisoner?" "You're right, I do. We's high strikers t'gether." "How long have you known him?" "Sence we wus chaps." "How long has he been running blind stills?" "Now yer got me; I dunno." "Do you run a still?" The lawyers contended about this question for some time, and before it was decided the man said, "'Taint no use ter talk so much 'bout it; I kin tell yer; naw, I don't run no still." "Did the prisoner tell you that he meant to kill the revenue officer?" "Naw." "Were you with the moonshiners when they were preparing to attack the revenue officer?" "Yer mean whin that man shot Mac?" "Yes." "Naw, I war not thar endurin' o' the skirmish, but my son John, he war thar, and he sed he wished he hadn't 'a' went." "Why did your son say that?" "'Caze, man, he met with er leetle accident." "What accident? Was he wounded?" "Naw; he war one o' them what wus swung up fur try-

in' ter kill that revenue man." He was asked a number of other questions, but gave evasive or confused testimony, that was of little or no benefit to McCabe.

McCabe's brother was put on the stand, and said that McCabe was hunting with him, when they met some one who told them of the officer's death. He was questioned as to the hunt, and once said they were hunting partridges; again, rabbits, and then said they were hunting anything they could find. They all told the story of the hunt except the first woman.

"What time was the man shot?" was asked one. "Just at five o'clock in the last half o' the day; we met er man not but er few minutes arterwards, an' he tole us so. Mac said he'd better run, for they'd sure think 'twus him; an' he run." "Who was the man you met?" "Jim Whitaker." "Where is he now?" He was one of the witnesses and was called in. "Did you meet this man and McCabe and tell them that the revenue officer had just been killed?" "Yes." "Did you see him killed?" "Naw, I never seed him; met er man an' he tole me."

Two or three other men were called in and testified about the same thing. The last one came from Walesca, and had heard it there at least two hours after it happened. They evidently had agreed to tell this story.

Speeches on both sides were made, the judge summed up, the jury retired, and in fifteen minutes returned. The foreman arose.

"May it please your honor, the jury has arrived at a verdict. The prisoner is found guilty of murder in the first degree."

No one was surprised; though doubts were expressed as to the justice of the verdict, on the ground that the identity of the murderer with McCabe was not clearly proved.

After McCabe had been sentenced to death, I tried to see him, to ascertain if he was the man who had been watching me, but was not allowed to do so. His law-

yers appealed for a new trial and got it, on a technicality.

During the second trial it was found that McCabe's still had been burned about two months before the plot against the revenue officer, and that he had not rebuilt it. He was from home when the plot was made, and returned the night of the difficulty. He passed the conspirators, and stopped to talk with them, but took no part in the plot. The jury gave him the benefit of the doubt and acquitted him, and he was at once released.

It was the most remarkable trial I had ever known, that a man sentenced to be hung should finally be released. All who had testified against him were stricken with terror. I, though my testimony had not been convicting, felt uncomfortable when I thought of meeting this man on Pine Log. The man who had tried to bribe me said: "I don't reckon you'll need the cow."

After his release was ordered, McCabe arose and made the following statement:

"I've been near 'nough ter the gallows not ter want ter git that near no more; I's goin' ter live peaceable arter this, an' I want ter tell all who's testified ag'in' me that I ain't er goin' to hurt 'm. They needn't be skeered. I wouldn't kill 'm ef I had the bes' chance in the world. They thought they wus right an' I don't think no less o' 'm, an' we ain't er goin' ter have no fuss. I's goin' back home er peaceable man."

He passed near me as he was leaving the courtroom, and I stopped him and asked if he was not the man who had watched me so long: "Mr. McCabe, I'm almost sure you are."

"Don't be too sure o' nothin'," he said, "an' don't ax me who I been watchin'. I's been in the business too much ter talk 'bout it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

On returning home after the conclusion of the second trial, I considered a good deal as to whether or not I should return to Walesca. My friend had written several times, but, he had not asked me to come back. Katherine was getting better, and one day she called me into her room and said:

"Father, mother has told me of the cause of the trouble with your old friend at Walesca; I am mortified that you could have thought of me as you have, and pained that I should have caused you and your friend so much trouble. I trust you will forgive me, and I will try to forgive you; but you have wronged me. I am not in love with my teacher. I am too much of a woman, I hope, to fall in love with any man who does not care for me, especially one whose relation to me as my professor in college would debar me from loving. I am hurt that you regarded me as a giddy girl, thinking only of love, and not as a young woman who is trying to prepare herself for life and the highest service she can render the world. You have taken me from a noble work that I have learned to love, and that was doing me more good than I was doing the people, and you have forsaken a field that needs the best laborers. The president of the college cannot do your work; I do not suppose he will attempt it; and certainly no one else could fill your place. I want you to return. The moonshiner's trial is over; you have nothing to keep you here now. Write to the president and tell him you will come. He would be glad, I know; or I will write if you feel that you will be compromised, and you shall see that I write a womanly letter."

She wrote and brought me her letter :

"Father has said that I may write and tell you why he thought it best to take me from Walesca. It was because he thought I cared for some one, and would not study well or help as I should in the work. It is but just to myself to say that he was mistaken. But he was right to take me away as long as he thought about me as he did. I am altogether to blame, and beg your pardon for causing you and father so much trouble, and for interfering with the work that you both love so much, and that I also love and long to see prosper. I think it would be your wish for father to come back and help you, and I think it is his wish to do so. As I have broken a bond of friendship old and strong, I trust you will allow me to be the medium of its renewal, and that you and father will be truer, firmer friends than before."

My sweet, thoughtful, noble child!

"Katherine," I said, "you are right; I have misjudged you. You are more of a woman than I thought. I beg your pardon; it is right that I should."

"No, father, I will not have you do that; I only want you to understand me."

"And you do not love my old friend?"

A faint flush rose to her cheeks.

"I see you do not trust me yet, father. If I have ever thought for a moment of loving anyone, the thought has been suppressed as unworthy of me now. I could never care for any but a true man, and certainly I am not worthy to love such a one yet."

"Katherine, I am glad that you can feel as you do. I am so glad I understand you better, and I will always trust you hereafter. I will go back to Walesca if my friend wants me to come, and you must go with me. If you wish, you may send your letter, but I will send one too."

I wrote that night, and in a few days my friend sent a reply that was worthy of him, assuming the blame and asking pardon. He seemed mortified beyond

measure to have intruded upon personal feeling, though he really had not. He had not suspected the real cause, he said. His letter I preserve yet among treasured papers.

To Katherine he said:

"Your womanly letter has reached me and calls for a nobler response than I can make; but it is not because I do not wish to make such a one. A woman's feeling is so delicate, though, that a man can never hope to respond to it in like manner. So you will pardon rugged expression. I thank you for what you have done. You have been braver and truer than either your father or I, and we are indebted to you both for the renewal of our friendship and for the continuance of the work. You should not blame yourself; I, alone, am to blame for intruding upon your father's personal feelings. For a long while he had reserved nothing from me, and I had forgotten that there could be feelings too sacred for me to share with him. Forgive my rudeness to your father. He must certainly come back. The work is waiting for him, and has suffered terribly, by his absence. You must come to assist him. There is too much for him to do alone. I shall expect you both next week. Truly, your own and your father's friend."

Of course we went. My wife's last injunction was: "Do not break yourself down or allow Katherine to break down, and do not get wrought up by your work to such a nervous tension that you will not be just to yourself and to our child."

We went on in the old way at Walesca, and no reference was ever made to what had happened. I noticed one thing, though; my friend never called upon Katherine to assist him in his personal work now. Katherine had studied very hard at home despite her sickness, and stood her examinations well.

There was one sufferer from the examinations, though. Bill failed to stand one, and was kept in the preparatory department another year. Poor Bill! He

had studied hard under difficulties. He had to do much of the work at home, and every day he went over to help Mol's mother; then he was obliged to get splinters to make a little money, and the walk to school was long. He deserved great credit for being at school at all, and had really done well under the circumstances.

Bill himself, however, was thoroughly disheartened. He left school immediately, and did not come back for commencement, though a part in the exercises had been allotted to him. His place had to be filled by some one else. I could not even persuade him to attend the commencement as a visitor.

"It would be a tryin' thing for me, Mr. Ramla. I might 'a' been on the stage myself if I hadn't done so bad. I couldn't stand it to see the others an' think I ought to be among 'm."

I told him that a number of students who failed to stand their examinations would be on the stage because they had got speakers' places before the examinations had been held, and that there would be plenty of students in the audience who had failed to be enrolled for a higher class.

"They must not have no pride; they ain't like me, or maybe they didn't want to rise as bad 's I did."

He had stopped for good this time, he said. One day after commencement I went to see him, and talked very seriously to him. I condemned him, and spoke in harsh tones when I saw milder ones had no effect. He listened respectfully, but that was all. Bill was very stubborn at times.

"No, I don't take interest like I used to, Mr. Ramla. Mol ain't here now, you know, an' I miss her an' gits irritated. Ef she'd been here maybe I wouldn't 'a' failed. I tell you what 'tis, er feller don't know himself till he's tried. I thought I was goin' to do so much fur the world, an' I had such big ideas of what life is an' what folks ought to do, 'fore Mol lef', but somehow sence thin I have come ter the conclusion I don't care

so much fur the world. I must 'a' been thinkin' 'bout Mol an' what I was goin' to do for her sake (though she didn't want me ter,) whin I fooled myself into believin' 'twas on account o' the world I felt that way. Maybe it's good she left; I know myself better now, an' I ain't half as good as I thought I wus. I feel powerful mean, too, whin I think I drove Mol away frum her mother, an' we don't know whether we'll ever see her no more or not. It's like the ole man an' that grave on the mountain. I'm afraid Mol an' me won't meet till one o' us stands by the grave o' the other. You dunno how sad 'tis, Mr. Ramla."

I tried to lessen his feeling of depression by taking him on Pine Log to witness a beautiful scene. The mountain was fresh with the touch of spring. The pine and the oak, the cedar and the maple, with their sister trees, stretched their limbs to show their soft green garb in the light of the setting sun. Like flower gardens at their feet bloomed the laurel, the wild ash, the scentless violet, and the fragrant arbutus. Along the diferent ridges the shades varied while between was the deep mellow verdure of the mosses, the last touch of the sunset having left them for the night. The streams rushed madly down the slopes, and the wind fanned us with its cooling breath. Now and then it would sweep near the ground, scatter the dead leaves, and snatch from an arbutus blossom its fragrance. We could almost hear it whisper, "These need it more than you," and quickly it rose freighted with perfume.

"Is it not pleasant here, Bill?"

"Yes."

"How long since the snow covered the mountain, the trees were bare, the flowers dead! Will not the One who cares for the mountain care also for you? Yea, longer. 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my kindness shall not depart; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.'"

CHAPTER XXIV.

The summer passed pleasantly. Katherine went home. I went, too, for a few days, but soon returned. The crackers were people who had to be constantly urged. They thought they were conferring a favor upon me to consider their own interests, and as long as I did not ask that they should, they did not feel called upon to do so.

I went to see Mr. Nicely, the gold-washer.

"Law, Mr. Ramla, I thought you'd done gone fur good; I ain't thought 'bout the chiluns edication since. I ain't made up the money I lost on that ox yit, neither; but I'll think 'bout the matter 'fore fall. What you done ter Bill over thar? He ain't goin' no more, he says, but he says it's er good place, too; I don't understand it."

"Bill has had a good many disadvantages to labor under this year, and he failed on one of his examinations; that is all. He will recover from this mortification by fall and return to school I think."

"Um! I never did think Bill had 's much sense 's he thought he had; but 'twon't be so with my chaps; they won't fail on nothin'; reckon I'd better let 'm go jes' ter show folks what they kin do."

Mr. Sims said:

"For sure Mr. Ramla, they rumor'd 'round that you an' 'Fessor was mad, an' you warn't goin' ter have nothin' more ter do 'ith the college, an' nobody ain't said nothin' ter me 'bout sendin' the chilun ter put me in mind o' it, and I clear furgot ter make 'rangements; I'll send 'm this fall, though, ef you think it's bes'."

A number of others spoke in the same manner.

"Bill," I said, one day, "of course you have decided by now to return to school when it opens again."

"That depends; I ain't made no decision yet. I made up my mind to one thing, though; I ain't goin' back in the same class."

"Don't be stubborn, Bill. You will be compelled to do that."

"Naw, sir, I ain't compelled to do nothin'; an' I ain't stubborn neither, but I'm proud. How would it look for a cadet to go back in his class? I would just as soon pull off the straps if I was a officer. I'm stud-yin' powerful hard now, an' if 'Fessor'll let me stand the examination over just like I was entering college, and I get through, I will go on; but if he won't do that, or if he does an' I don't get through, I won't go neither. I done stated the only terms upon which I'll ever go to college again."

I thought this rather commendable than not, and told him so. The president was very kind, and encouraged Bill's pride, so when fall came, he returned to college and went to work with renewed energy.

Moreover, not satisfied with his own success, he made earnest efforts to get his friends to attend school. He succeeded with Bob Smith, his enemy of the cock-fight, and it was pleasant to see how Bill labored for Bob, and helped him whenever he could. Bob was not a very good student, but Bill managed his protégé admirably. He encouraged, scolded, or shamed him as he needed, but always excused him to the school and shielded him from the merciless criticism of the students.

* * * * *

Often as I went to the mountain, I never saw the apparition there again. I ceased in time to expect him, and doubted no longer that he was McCabe. McCabe had given up the life of the moonshiner, and was quietly farming, and people gradually lost their fear of him.

* * * * *

"Has Lewis ever tried again to pass off counterfeit money?" I asked my friend, one day.

"I do not know: he has not been caught attempting it, but counterfeit money is still circulated. Complaints have been made, and we have thought of employing a detective to ferret the matter out. There must be a counterfeiter's den not far from this place. What do you say to trying to break it up?"

"I tried it once, you remember, but without success."

The upshot was that at our request the authorities promised to send a detective to look into the matter.

Does the recital of so much lawlessness and crime seem strange to you? It is no blood-and-thunder story that I am telling. It is a plain account of the actual difficulties that have impeded those who have attempted to better the life of the crackers. It is the history of a people who for centuries have needed the world's help, and have not received it until now.

The detective, a man named Sanders, came, ostensibly to hunt. The partridge season had opened; the shooting was good. I went with him two or three days, and showed him the by-paths and dangerous places. He went often at night and every day until the entire country had been scoured. No trace of the counterfeiter was found.

"I have come to the conclusion that the money is not made here," he said.

"Where, then?" I asked. "Surely no one would risk sending it through the mail or by express."

"You cannot tell the ins and outs of these men. I shall stay at Walesca a day or two and see what is to be seen. The man may not be outside of the town."

In a day or two the detective said to me:

"I think I have the man. Go with me to-night and judge for yourself."

I went with him to the outskirts of the town. It was twelve o'clock, and all the town slumbered but ourselves

and the occupant of a little log cabin we visited. We looked in the window and saw a strange sight. The window was curtained, but between the lower end of the curtain and the window-sill was a space of perhaps an inch, and through this we watched the eccentric movements of an old man. He was not more than four feet six inches high, with long gray locks, dishevelled by his constantly running his hand through them. A keen, gray eye, small and searching, glanced furtively about the room at times, and towards the door, as if expecting someone. A gray beard came to his waist, and made him, in his strange, ragged dress, look like a wizard.

"Do you think this man is a criminal?" the detective asked.

"I know him well," I said.

The old man went to his bed of straw, ripped the side, and after some search, drew out a small bag; then another, and another, until he had taken out seven bags. He sat down to a rickety table, in a rickety chair, and began counting the coin. We saw him count it carefully, seven thousand dollars from each bag, then as carefully put it back. For some minutes he sat gazing upon the bags, at times with a smile of satisfaction, and then with a frown of displeasure. Finally he put them in the bed again, covered them well with straw, and sewed the ripped places in back stitches. He then took a shot-gun from the wall, examined it closely to see that it was loaded, tried the trigger, and placed the gun by the bed. He took an old army pistol from the table drawer, gave it the same careful examination as the gun, and put it under his pillow. Though he had examined the door before he counted his money, he inspected it again to be sure that it was bolted, then blew out the dim light of a small brass lamp, and we heard him go to bed.

"Do you not think this the man?" the detective asked.

"No," I answered; "I think I can exculpate him from the guilt of counterfeiting money, though in my eyes he is a criminal. I will tell you his story to-morrow."

"There is only one thing that has kept me from deciding that he is the man," he said, "and that is that I have seen no confederate here; he seems to be alone in the business. I have watched him for three nights and his actions indicated guilt. You noticed him try a coin now and then to see if it would ring, as if distrustful of its passing for good money?"

"He was testing its genuineness. He is a miser," I said.

The next morning I told the detective the old man's history:

"I did not think to tell you there was such a character here. His name is Denton. He came while the Cherokee Indians were still settled in this country, and made friends with many of them. He was very kind to them, and they to him. One of them had accumulated a large sum of money, and just before the Indians were removed he took Denton out and showed him where it was buried. He gave it all to Denton, saying that he would never need it. When the Indians were taken away they passed some graves along the road. This one broke from the ranks, and, throwing himself upon a spear, fell dead upon the graves of his loved ones; such was his devotion to them and to his home. Denton took the money, invested it, and has made a large fortune. He has children, but will not live with them, because he would not have them discover where his money is. We have made a discovery that he would never rest if he knew of. He is a spiritualist, though, and I hear that mediums are advising him to invest his money as they suggest. He will hardly have it long now; they will inveigle it out of him. Though the man is a miser, I think he is honorable, and would not for a moment handle counterfeit money."

"So I have been on the wrong track," replied the detective. "Still, there is counterfeit money circulated here. I have seen at least fifty dollars of it since I came. I'm glad, though, that you told me this old

man's story, for I should certainly have arrested him soon."

He remained a short time longer, without finding anything definite, and left to return again when he thought best.

I had watched Lewis while he was there, and thought he suspected his business. He asked me one evening if Mr. Sanders was there just to hunt, and said he was staying a long time. He quizzed me a good deal about him, and seemed to feel uneasy when the detective was near.

I watched Callaway, too. He did not seem to feel that way, and I felt sure that he had nothing to do with the counterfeit money.

CHAPTER XXV.

I visited the school often then. I was always glad and proud when I heard Bill recite. His recitations, though not perfect, were always thoughtful. He was called the "interrogation point" of the class. It is usually the duty of the teacher to question, but this was an exceptional case. Bill never ceased to ask questions about everything in the lessons that he did not thoroughly understand, until he did understand perfectly.

I enjoyed hearing Katherine recite, too. She always looked so interested, and seemed not to recite by rote.

One day I walked in the hall at recess and took a seat unobserved to watch the happy faces. There is no better place to study character than in a school. The outline is just forming, and there is no thought of hiding it. Two girls were standing in the door of one of the recitation rooms.

"Katherine is a hateful girl," one of them said.

"Yes, just as hateful as she can be, and Professor is partial to her and gives her better marks than we get because he is in love with her."

"No, he isn't; he would never love her, though he would like to flirt with her. He gives her good marks just because she is Mr. Ramla's daughter. He needs him in his business here, the crusty old thing. A lot of men would do better than he does, and I don't know why the Professor courts him so."

A young girl that I did not know came up just then.

"Why, girls, I heard what you said. You know it is not true. Katherine is the loveliest girl in the school, and her father is doing a great work here."

Exaggerated though the statement may have been, she seemed in earnest and I felt grateful to her.

That night Katherine said to me:

"Father, I am so distressed. Some of the girls think the president of the college is partial to me, but it is not true. His whole life is so fair and open that I know he would not be guilty of such a thing."

"Schoolgirls, Katherine, as a rule, do not judge by the general character. They judge alone from particular cases. If the president is kind and pleasant to them he is the loveliest, the best, the noblest man in the world. If he displeases them, he is hateful and cross and mean, regardless of his general life. School children cannot be accurate critics; their minds are not well enough developed, and their experience is not wide enough. One must have patience with them."

"But, father, it is so unkind in them."

"That is true, but it is also unkind in you not to bear with that sort of thing. Neither you nor your schoolmates are perfect."

"But father, I have given them no cause, and Professor has not. I try to recite well, and he delights to give every one the highest marks she merits."

"I believe that," I said.

"Then, why do the girls speak as they do?"

"Because they have some little spite against you, and are conscious that you make greater efforts than they, and so deserve better marks."

"I do not want them to have a spite against me; I want them to love me."

"Then take no notice of their unpleasant remarks. Be as kind to them as you can; help them to get better marks; love them. Patient, unselfish love will beget love."

She seemed not fully satisfied yet, but said no more.

A few days later my friend said to me:

"I am sorry my students are so unjust as to say I mark partially. I have tried to merit their confidence, and I feel hurt that they express themselves as they do;

but I know that students are often unjust. Their youth and inexperience excuse them to some extent; I am old enough to understand that, but their remarks annoy Miss Katherine very much."

I think he feared that I should be hasty again and take Katherine from school. I told him what I had said to her, and he seemed relieved.

I thought it would amount to nothing; but some days afterwards I received an anonymous note:

"Your daughter is guilty of the most unpardonable cheating, and does not merit the marks she gets."

My friend also received a note accusing Katherine of cheating and him of allowing it. It was expressed in the most insulting terms, and seemed too bold for a girl to have written. He demanded an open investigation, and had the entire school appear before the faculty and examined each one, but no one acknowledged writing the note. He hardly expected an open confession, but sought to find out from the manner of the students who the offender was. His treatment of the case was severe and yet so mild that whoever wrote the note must have felt ashamed. I heard his lecture to the school, and I certainly should have felt uncomfortable if I had been among the guilty. I think some of the students felt so. I saw several blush and look around uneasily, among them the two girls I had heard talking in the class-room door.

The matter could not be dropped here, though. It had gone too far. My friend received a letter from the Bishop of the Conference, stating that he had been accused of allowing cheating in the classes, and that as the school was partly supported by the Conference, and belonged to the Methodist Church, he would be obliged to submit the matter to the Conference. He spoke kindly of my friend's work, and said he had too much confidence in him to believe the charge was true. The accusers had given their names to the Bishop—two girls and one boy—but they asked that their names be re-

served until it should be necessary to make them known. Of course my friend would have no trouble in proving the charge entirely false, but the thought of its having been made and of the trying examination before the Conference, was mortifying.

The publicity given to my daughter angered me more than anything else that had occurred at Walesca. I determined that the matter should be stopped at once, if possible. I thought I knew the culprits who had caused the trouble. I sent for them to come to my office. They were the two girls I had heard talking, and the Gaines boy.

"I shall speak very plainly to you. You, of course, are conscious of the fact that you have made a false charge against a man who is giving his life for you, in order that you may be here, a man who labors for you and who loves you, and whom you know is spotless. On account of some little spite you have allowed yourselves to do what compromises you. By taking this matter to Conference you will prove yourselves guilty of falsehood, and show the president even a better man than he is known to be in the Church. Do you not see you can but harm yourselves?"

Gaines protested against being charged.

"It is well to defend yourself when you are right," I replied, "but the bravest thing a man can do is to confess a fault. You have no doubt consented to do this without realizing what the result would be. There may be excuses for a man who acknowledges his wrong, but none for him who clings to it. I am as confident of your guilt, sir, as I am that you are in my presence now. I see your heart as well as if it were laid bare before me."

He muttered some sarcastic remark about my insight of character, and I stopped him.

"Young man, can you tell me positively that you did not write those notes, and had nothing to do with the writing of them?"

He looked as if he would rather be anywhere else

than where he was just then, but he made an effort at evasion.

"I knew they were written."

"Did you have nothing to do with the writing of them?"

"I saw them written."

Just then one of the girls broke down and cried hysterically.

"It is no use to deny it, Mr. Gaines; we are wrong."

He looked at her contemptuously, and turned away. The other girl began to abuse her for betraying a friend, and called her a baby. I told Gaines and this young woman that they might retire.

When the other girl had regained her composure, I asked her to tell me the whole story. Her friend, she said, was in love with the president, and wanted to stand well in her classes for this reason, but was not an industrious student. She was always irritated because Katherine stood better than she, and made herself very unpleasant because of it. The president took no more notice of her than of other members of the class, and marked her as he did them. Katherine, she said, had a habit of handling her book in class and opening it, from nervousness, she supposed. I had noticed it but had neglected to speak to her about it. She seemed not to know it at all, the young lady said, and never attempted to see the lesson. Her friend was very much angered when she saw her last report, and made the accusation before Gaines that Katherine cheated, and that the president of the college knew it. Gaines suggested the course they pursued. They talked so much about it as a fact that she came to believe that Katherine meant to cheat, but she had thought about it since and had noticed her, and knew it was not true. Mr. Gaines was in love with her friend, she said, and knew that she cared for the president, and was glad of the opportunity.

I talked to the girl about the enormity of the of-

fense, but she seemed already to realize it. She was brave enough to go to the president and acknowledge her guilt and express her sorrow. With his usual forbearance, he forgave her, but was stern enough to require an open confession before the school. If a student can stand a test like this, he or she is truly repentent, and exhibits great strength of character besides. It was for her good, not for his triumph. She would try to persuade her friend to adopt the same course, and I told the president that I would talk to both the girl and Gaines; but the next morning, before I had left my room, news came that Gaines and the girl had gone.

The next day the following notice appeared in the paper: "Canton, Ga., Nov. 10, 188—. Married by the Rev. John James, at his residence, at eight o'clock this morning, Miss Fannie Mercer to George Gaines, both students of Rheinhardt College. The couple ran away this morning and arrived in Canton about seven o'clock. They went to the home of the bride to be taken care of by her parents."

In after years Gaines became an industrious, worthy, Christian man, and his wife a noble Christian woman. Three years after the occurrence just related, they wrote my friend a joint letter of acknowledgment and regret, and expressed their gratitude for his efforts for them and his influence over them.

I wrote to the Bishop and sent him the statement of the young woman who acknowledged her fault. He accepted it and the matter was dropped.

Katherine had been much troubled, though, and I felt that if she should have more to bear, she would age too much during her experience at Walesca; though it is good even for girls to have burdens to bear. I took her on a round of visits to relieve her mind of thoughts of herself. The cracker girls loved her much, and during this visit she persuaded three of them to go to school.

Sometimes I thought Katherine knew something of

Mol's whereabouts. Instead of speaking sadly of her having left her home and her mother, she always spoke hopefully, and seemed not to have the regrets that I had. She was a great comfort to Mol's mother, as she was also to the old man, whose sweetheart had left him so long ago. Once he gave Katherine a small package. "'Twas hers," he said, "an' I know she'd 'a' wanted the like o' you ter have it." It was a tiny gold breastpin. "She's more comfortin' ter me 'n ennybody these days, Mr. Ramla," he said to me.

I overheard them talking at the grave one day. "You reckon little May'll be glad ter see me, Miss Katy? Mebbe she's so happy now 't won't make her no happier fur me ter come."

"I think it will, Mr. Brown. She has waited for your coming all these years, and it will surely be a joy to her. Now, in that wonderful city, she revels in intoxicating bliss, but memory never loses its freshness, even in eternity, and she thinks of this hallowed spot, not to her a lonely grave, but a place where loneliness can never come, because here were plighted vows that bound two lives so closely that even the powerful hand of death could not break them. She thinks of her mother in the sweet, peaceful home down yonder, and of you; and now and then she sweeps on soft pinions to the eternal gates and asks, 'Is he coming?' The angel answers, 'No,' and she returns, not sorrowing, but waiting. Some day, though, the angel will answer, 'Yes,' and with voice of supremest gladness she will express gratitude to God. The heraldic angel will shout so that his voice will reach the limits of heaven, 'The old man has come.' Then together you will fly to the white throne and bow in fullness of joy and gratitude for an eternal benediction upon yourselves and the vows pledged here."

"So may it be," the old man said.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was nearing the end of the year. The young people were all looking forward to the pleasures of the holidays.

On the night of the day when the school term ended, Bill had a party. It was a corn-shucking and an apple-butter-boiling combined. A large number of boys and girls were present.

"Goin' to put 'm to work," said Bill. "The girls can help mam make apple butter, an' the boys can help me shuck corn."

They separated, the girls going to one room and the boys to another.

"This is bad," I said; "the boys and girls would like to see something of each other. You are not a good business man, Bill. They would work better for being together."

"Oh, yes, I'm a first-class business man. You see, I separate 'm and tell 'm, 'Now, the sooner you git through, the sooner you git together.' They work harder than you ever saw folks. The only thing is the girls make the apple butter boil so fast that sometimes it burns. It's a heap better'n putting 'm together. When they're together they talk too much to work good, and the first thing you know some boy's got his gal off makin' love to her, an' they ain't workin' 'tall. Then, too, corn husks get in the apple butter, an' it ain't good seasoned with 'm."

I felt privileged to visit both rooms. Bill was right. They worked well separately that they might have pleasure together later. Bill was privileged, too, and went from room to room hurrying the workers.

The girls gathered around the apple butter, which boiled in a large vessel. When some tired of stirring, others came to take their places, and the stirring went on until the apple butter was done. The boys sat around the corn in the middle of the room, shucking rapidly, and singing the old field songs.

"Make haste, fellers; the girls 's most through," said Bill.

"Hurry up, girls; the boys work a heap faster'n you;" and so it went on until they were all through.

They then met in one room and their games began: "Clapping in and clapping out," "King William," "Going over the mountain," and a number of others. I had never seen a happier crowd, and I wondered if they could have found in more refined pleasures the same rich joy.

"I don't like this like I used to, Mr. Ramla," said Bill; "and how I do miss Mol!"

"Father, I have never seen anything so refreshing as this," Katherine said; "but it is pitiful, too. When will refinement and culture control here?"

She could not enjoy participating in the cracker games, and now and then would plead weariness. Callaway was present, but he was the gentleman that night. He and Katherine conversed much during the evening. It was what I feared when I brought her to Walesca. He was more congenial in conversation than the crackers. Katherine was perfectly dignified, however, and her companion perfectly respectful. I would not be foolish again, and so allowed them to talk.

Bill finally stopped the playing, and called the boys and girls together.

"I've got something to say to you, but I ain't goin' ter be a goose, like I was at commencement year before last. You all know me, boys and girls, know all about me, and you know I ain't done no good in the world for twenty-two years."

"You's er fust-class chap, Bill," some one said.

"No, I ain't no good, and ain't never been none, but I'm tryin' to make somethin' out of nothin' and I don't say it boastin', but some day you'll see a man out of lazy, good-for-nothin' Bill Collins. I didn't get up here to tell you how much I know, but Perfessor says I'm doin' right well, and I believe he ain't flatterin' me. However that is, I want to tell you all how much better 'tis to go to school and make somethin' out o' yourselves than to do like I've been doin' up to two years ago."

"You don't look no better'n you wus 'fore you went ter college," said some one.

"Maybe I don't look no better," replied Bill, "but I feel better."

"You allurs did feel mighty big," cried another.

"I don't feel's big's I did, and that's the reason I know I'm bigger. Howsomever, we won't talk 'bout that; I want you all to go to school. You been foolin' about long enough. If you was to find a gold dollar in the road, you wouldn't wait three or four years to pick it up, would you? But here's gold sense waitin' to be picked up, and you just leave it 'lone."

They commenced hissing him.

"It's the last time I'll come ter your house, big-Ike Bill," a boy said when the hissing ceased. "Ever' time I come you boast o' what you's makin' 'o yerself, an' tries ter pull me ter school, whin I ain't a-goin'. I's goin' ter wait an' see ef you make ennythin' more'n you's been, an' thin I kin try; plenty o' time thin."

"No, thar ain't," another said; "you'll die 'fore he does it;" and they began hissing again.

"That's all right, boys; you can keep on hissin'; it ain't very polite, but it don't matter to me; you'll see in a year or two that I'm right. A boy or girl ain't got no right to waste their lives and never do themselves or anybody else any good."

"I reckon we kin do what we please with ourselves," some one said; "I'm my own boss."

"Yes you can steal, too, but you ain't got no right to do it. Some of these days you'll run against the sheriff, and he'll show you about your rights. You ain't got no real rights but to be men and women, and bless the world. If you don't do that, up yonder you'll be judged for that the same as for stealin' a big chaw o' tobacco."

One young man arose and said:

"Well, thar's somthing 'bout it; some o' you say you don't see no change in Bill. I do. I started out hiss'n' him 'ith the rest o' you, but I stopped whin Bill sed what he did 'bout not makin' no dif'rence with him. He stood it, but he wouldn't er done 't two year ago. He'd er tried ter fight the whole lot o' us. I don't b'lieve he keers fur fightin' now. I dunno whether he's got 'ligion or got l'arnin', but he's got somethin' he didn't use ter have, an' I b'lieve we'd better listen ter what he's er sayin'; leastwise, I's goin' ter listen. Bill, you kin look out fur me over at Warlesky nex' year; I's comin' sure."

Others expressed themselves in the same manner. Bill had gained a great triumph.

"Ef it keeps on so, the whole country'll be at Warlesky arter er while: better make more room ter er school-house, Bill," a good-natured boy said.

"Plenty of room for all," Bill responded.

The visitors left. I congratulated Bill, but he said:

"'Tain't me; 'tis you and Perfessor."

The next school term six other crackers entered school. Bill was a home missionary.

Katherine and I went home the next day, and my friend went to spend the holidays with me. He enjoyed the change for a day or two, but he was thoroughly broken down from the trying experiences that had marked his life for several years. He grew listless, and was constantly excusing himself for his dullness.

At last, one night, I was relating something to him,

and listened for an answer. He did not reply, and I looked to where he was sitting. He had fainted in his chair. For weeks he was very ill. His mother came and nursed him, and when the time for opening school came, I went back to Walesca with Katherine until my friend was well.

Once or twice in years gone by burglars had attempted to enter our house. Once they did enter, and left with whatever they could take, including a valuable gold watch that had belonged to my grandfather. I remember his telling me that when he bought it in Geneva he asked where the best watches were sold, and was told at every jewelry store, that it was impossible to get a watch of inferior make in Geneva. This seemed strange to me, American jewelers sometimes palm off such inferior works. In the inner case, in black enamel, were my grandfather's initials. After the watch had been gone ten years, a man had been arrested for stealing a horse, and on his person the watch was found.

Well, this watch I had left in the room which my friend occupied, in a small jewelry case in my trunk. When my friend was getting better, and could be alone at night, he had a peculiar experience. About twelve o'clock some one entered the room; he was conscious of the fact, though not fully aroused from sleep. He heard no further sound, saw nothing, and concluded he had been dreaming. Presently, however, he seemed to become conscious that two men were standing over his bed. But he appeared to be under some subtle influence, and could not arouse himself. The men made signs about him, and though he was almost unconscious, he heard them speaking:

"I hate doing this. If I had known he was in here I never would have entered the house. He's sick, and I'm afraid he won't get over this. Suppose we've murdered him!"

"Don't be so chicken-hearted; you're afraid of your own shadow. Suppose he does die, what of that?"

They've been expecting him to die, and they'll think the disease killed him. Nobody will ever know the difference? But somebody may come in to see how he is. We must get through."

My friend heard them moving about the room, but could not move himself nor turn his eyes to see them. There was bare consciousness, that was all. They came to the bed again.

"By heavens! I believe he's dead," one said. "Oh, to have killed my best friend! This will end burglary for me; it is my first, and it shall be my last experience."

"It is because it is your first experience that you are so foolish. He is not dead. We must be off. Come."

And he started out, but the other stayed a moment, looked to see if his accomplice had gone, stooped quickly and kissed my friend's brow. Then he, too, left.

In the morning, about ten o'clock, my friend awoke. He was alone, and the room looked as it had before he went to sleep. Not a chair seemed to have been moved. He felt an uncomfortable dullness. That was all that seemed to indicate that the experience of the night had been a reality. He rang the bell and his mother came.

"You were sleeping so quietly that I would not disturb you," she said. "You have rested well, and you are better."

He told her that he had rested well, with the exception of a horrible nightmare. He then related his experience, but did not intimate that he feared it was really true. In fact, he told me that after being refreshed by his breakfast, and thinking calmly over the matter he did not give much credence to its being a reality.

He recovered rapidly after that, and soon returned to college. I told him that nothing unpleasant had occurred during his absence. He laughed and said he had

been afraid to entrust the college to my care before, but since I had kept the boys straight this time, he would try me again, not to have a spell of sickness but a jolly good time.

He told me of the experience I have just related, and I replied :

“I’ll guarantee that the men were really burglars, and I think I might guess who they were; but no, it would be unkind.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

The school was nearing the close of its term, and we had decided to have a pleasant excursion of a week or two to a lake about thirty miles off, noted for its good fishing. We would take tents and camp out. We intended to have a large party of students with us, and my wife would come to chaperon the girls.

We started before dawn two days after commencement, and the fresh dews of the mountains cooled and refreshed us for a happy day. The young people were hilarious. I almost wished to be young with them. It takes so little to gladden the spirit of youth. A balmy breeze, a genial sunray, a happy thought, a pleasant exchange of words, and the heart bounds with joy and life. With the old it is different.

At eight in the evening we reached the lake. With common impulse we came to a halt some distance from the placid sheet of water. The horses, too seemed to stop of their own desire to witness the scene. One would almost dare believe that they, also, had sentiment. There was no grandeur, but such peace!

I remember that the first large art collection I ever visited was the Corcoran Gallery in Washington. Some one asked me what painting I liked best in the gallery. I readily replied, "Cæsar Dead." "That is considered the finest," was the rejoinder, "but I like that little Connecticut landscape the best." I had noticed the picture, and its quiet beauty had impressed me. But I passed it by quickly in order to give more time to the more showy canvas, so when my interlocutor spoke, I felt rather ashamed that I had not given it more thought. Since then I have always looked out for the

little "Connecticut Landscapes" in life. They quiet perturbed spirits, rest the weary brain, and give inspiration to the higher nature.

In a little cove in the mountains, a small basin of water, not more than a quarter of a mile in width and a half a mile in length, stretched its smooth surface before us. Rugged and rough looked the hills that enclosed it, and I thought of the diamond, with its brown crust around the sparkling crystal. The canopy of heaven curved above it, and out of the deep blue a thousand stars sent down their beams, that blended in one soft light, casting on the lake a silvery radiance. The moon rose slowly between the hills like a great ball of fire. It seemed almost as if the trees that stretched their limbs to keep its light from the lake should blaze from their apparent close contact with it. But the fire died out, and the moon rising above the shade of the trees, swung triumphantly in the heavens, and hung as a silver ball over the lake. Moonlight is beautiful everywhere, but nowhere so beautiful as on the placid waters of a mountain lake.

We pitched our tents, prepared supper, and after it was served went out in some little boats upon the enchanted water. The ring of merry voices sounded along the hills, and many an echo returned the glad sound.

In the early morning the fishing began, and we breakfasted on trout and perch. The sport was carried on more extensively afterward, when the whole party sat on rough roots watching the lines as they dipped, and throwing now and then a floundering fish upon the bank.

Bill had a right to be proud; he was the best angler of the party. But there was a better than he on the lake. Soon after beginning the sport for the day we noticed on the other side of the water a queer-looking human creature fishing. Even Bill had never looked so eccentric in dress and person as this boy. He was evidently a cracker whom enlightenment had not reached.

"These folks is worse than us, Mr. Ramla, if they're all like that fellow. I'm afraid you'll leave us and come up here."

My friend and I went to where the boy was. We spoke pleasantly to him. He did not even look up, but simply said:

"Mornin'."

We felt somewhat repulsed, and spoke to him again, asking about the best fishing places.

"It's good 'nough on t'other side whar you come frum, I guess; but nobody couldn't ketch nothin' 'ith the screamin' that's goin' on over thar. It gits in the water an' comes floatin over here pesterin' the fish I'se throwin' fur. You think fish like talkin? They ain't that kind. They like quiet, peacable chaps like me that don't show their sense out'n their mouth. Folks loses sense ef they keep talkin' it out. Arter er while they'll find they's right empty in the skull. I keep all mine right whar it belongs, whar the wind can't blow it away. —Thar, I'd er caught that flounder ef you hadn't come botherin' me. I tell you ag'in, fish ain't ketched by talkin. They'se ketched by er hook that don't 'pear ter have no hand ter drap it, nor no head ter watch it."

We said nothing, and in a few moments he exclaimed:

"Now I'se got you! You thought you'd 'scape, did you? I know'd you wouldn't. You see what I git by not talkin'—the best fish in the lake. This feller got skeered when we wus talkin' er while ago, an' swum right over ter t'other side, and they yelled so over thar it skeered him back, an' he thought he'd come up ter see what *wus* the matter. Go over quick an' tell 'm to keep up the yellin'. It helps my bizness."

We laughed, and asked him to teach us the art of wielding the hook and line and to divide his success with us.

"Now, that ain't 'zactly fair. You fellers's fishin' fur fun, and I'se fishin' fur bizness. I sell these things

an' makes er heap o' money, but trade's sorter slow now and they may not sell; so you kin fisher longside er me, I reckon, an' ketch what you kin, an' you jes' watch how I handle the pole."

We did so and caught nothing, but our companion's success remained the same. We asked him why it was.

"'Caze you'se watchin' how I handle the pole, an' you ain't watchin' the fish bite. You could er caught 'most 's many 's me ef you'd tried right. That's what I tole you ter look 't me fur. I know'd you warn't cross-eyed and couldn't look two ways 't wunst, but I's purty nigh done now, an' you kin watch the fish. A man has ter look out fur his bizness, you see, an' I'se the best man at that you ever know'd."

We asked him where he sold his fish.

"Up here 't the boardin' house. Folks come ter fish, an' they board, an' I ketch the fish, an' they has ter buy 'm. It's er great way ter do, but thar ain't nobody o' 'm that kin ketch fish, an' they has ter buy 'm—them folks that tents like you'ns buys 'm too. Don't you want ter buy some?"

"Have you a good school here?" I asked.

"School? What's that?"

I tried to tell him.

"Naw, ain't got nothin' o' that kind. Thar wus er place sorter like you say 'bout five miles from here, but I soon broke that up. We uns don't want ter be pestered 'ith nothin' o' that sort. I never went ter it, but they tole me they done sorter like you say, an' they made folks spend money fur books an' pay ter l'arn out o' 'm, an' I know'd we wouldn't have no money in the country ef that kep' up; so the teacher—I b'lieve that's what you call 'm—he come over ter the lake one night ter fish, an' I wus here, an' he got ter talkin' 'bout my goin' ter him and larnin', an' I tole him I'd l'arned all I wanted ter know, an' I didn't think he could l'arn me no more ef I hadn't; an' he kep' talkin', an' I tole him as how he'd talked 'nough; an' he wouldn't stop, an'

I reminded him of what Callaway once did about a note Bill wrote to Mol.

"Do you believe it, Mr. Ramla?"

I frankly said, "No."

"Then I'll be doubtful too."

I determined to try to find out something definite about Mol, and one day I sent for Callaway:

"Mr. Callaway, I hear you have definite knowledge of Mollie Smith. She has been gone so long, and her mother has heard nothing from her except an occasional note, that I know she would receive your news with joy if you would even tell her where her daughter is. You ought to do this in consideration of a mother's love."

"I think so too, Mr. Ramla. I told Miss Mary her mother ought to know something about her, and insisted on her allowing me to tell her, but she would not consent to it."

"Have you seen Mollie since she left?" I asked abruptly.

He was confused but answered, "No."

"Have you heard from her often?"

"I think this is a private matter," he replied with some dignity.

"I understand that you are engaged to Miss Smith, Mr. Callaway, and if that is true you have a right to reserve personal matters from me; but I am Mollie's friend and her mother's, and I do not consider that I have asked you too personal a question."

"I have heard from her only once, then, if you insist upon knowing; but that communication was enough. I insist upon your reading it."

"Not if it is a personal matter, Mr. Callaway."

"Yes; I insist upon your reading it."

"Have you a right to believe that Mollie would not object?"

"I have a right to believe that she would be glad for you to read it under the circumstances. It would relieve me, and she would be glad to do that."

It was a simple note, stating that she had learned to love him after a long absence, and did not consider it unwomanly to tell him so, since he had so often urged her to cultivate some feeling of affection for him, and she had made a promise once that if she ever cared for him she would tell him of her feeling. They might be married when he was able to take care of her, but until then she thought she had better not see or hear from him, there had always been so much trouble about Bill. "Poor Bill!" she wrote, "it is right that you should tell him."

"Of course some one wrote the note for her?" I queried.

"Of course," he said.

I looked at the postmark.

"Mr. Callaway, you will excuse my queries; I am interested in this matter. It is a very strange thing to me that you, a boy of aristocratic blood, and whose family has social prestige, should think of caring for a mountain girl of cracker family, and without education."

"It is strange to me," he said, "and if my people knew it they would violently oppose it; but I have been very reckless, you know, and I want to settle down and live a better life. Mary Smith is the best girl I know, and will help me more in leading a good life than any other woman who would marry me."

"That is a proper feeling, Mr. Callaway, and I am glad you have it, but there is selfishness in it. Have you considered what such a girl as Mollie deserves in a husband? You are marrying for your own good alone."

"I know I am not worthy of her, but the difference in social elevation will balance in some way my defect of character."

"That is a commentary upon society, Mr. Callaway, but it is largely true. Most girls would consider it sufficient, but if Mollie loves you, she loves you for yourself, in spite of all your vices, and not for your position."

"That is true," he said.

"Mr. Callaway, I congratulate you upon winning Mollie, but I am sorry for it. I think Bill, after many years of love for her, and a purer life, perhaps, than you can offer her, deserved to win her."

"That may be true, but the matter is with her, you know."

"That is true, and if you have won her under such circumstances, you should feel all the more bound to be worthy of her. She is a fair, sweet, pure girl. See that you do not wreck her life, see that you never pollute it. I congratulate you heartily upon your determination to lead a better life. A boy is never beyond the outstretched arm of God when he can consider his condition and desire to make it better. Indeed, when this desire is a resolution, God's arm is near to save him."

He thanked me, and hesitated. His face was as pale as if the death shadow had fallen upon it.

"What is it, Mr. Callaway? You have something to say?"

"I was about to make a confession; but I will not."

"If it would relieve you, make it now. I am not your priest, but I am your friend, and shall be glad if I can help you."

"Not now, don't ask me," he said. "Some other time I will tell you."

"Settle that with your own heart," I answered; and he left.

Callaway had shown more manhood than I had ever known him to do, and I felt more hopeful of him, but his manner was strange and confused part of the time. A man who has led a guilty life is often strange in his manner—nervous, suspicious, furtive.

I wrote to Mollie, urging her to let her mother know more about her, and telling her what I had heard of her intention of marrying Callaway. "Is it true, Miss Mollie? I ask from sincere interest in you." I

addressed it to the office from which Callaway's letter came, to be returned in five days if not called for. In about a week it came back to me.

"What does this mean?" I asked Callaway. "I wrote to Mollie, and the letter is returned."

"Of course; as long as she does not wish her whereabouts to be known, she would not mail a letter from the place in which she lived."

Bill and I kept the matter from Mol's mother. Callaway continued in school. He told me he intended to finish school before marrying, so there was no need to feel immediate uneasiness in reference to the matter. Besides, Callaway had expressed his determination to live a better life, and was endeavoring to prove the truth of the determination, and I thought might make a worthy husband. Poor Bill! He seemed to feel no anger with Callaway now, only a deep regret for his own loss.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Bill was now in the freshman class in college. A mind that has had no training until its owner has passed the years for the usual mental culture, is nearly always slowly developed, and that is why I had tried so hard to get the older crackers to send their children to school. The rule does not always work, however. I have known some grown men and women to enter school for the first time and progress rapidly. This is especially true of the mountain classes. Their minds, though uncultured, are as fresh and vigorous as their native air, and sometimes the adult's mind expands, after some effort, like a child's.

Bill had done well. He had a philosophical mind, and would some day, I thought, be known as a reasoner. His spoken English was yet incorrect. It was necessarily so from lifelong practice and association, and was not a fair test of his advancement; but even this was improving. In writing, his English teacher told me, he was very correct.

"Mr. Ramla," Bill said to me, "I don't want my little brothers to grow up talkin' like me. It seems to me I never will get no English education. I know what's right, but I can't use my knowledge; it's just because I've been raised on my kind of talk. Some days I get fightin' mad with the English teacher 'cause he stops me ever' five minutes to correct my speech when I'm talkin' about principles and ain't thinkin' about language. I ought to 'a' been learned to speak correct before I begun to learn principles. Now, I want my little brothers to start to school 'fore they're set in their speech, so that the influence of the college may balance this here at

home. And I want 'm to go before they get set in thought. It took me more'n a year to give up my ideas, and sometimes they crop out yet. What you think about puttin' Sam in school now?"

"Your theory is demonstrated by your own experience; I should certainly put him in school at once."

"I'll do it then. Mam'll do what I say."

So Sam started to school. He was just ten years old, and proved to be very teachable. Bill was proud of him, and said:

"I believe before long Sam will catch up with me." He helped him at home with his lessons. It was very pleasant to see him teach the child before he learned his own lessons.

Katherine took a great interest in the little fellow, too, and so did Miss Blackwell.

I was afraid he would be spoiled by attention, especially as it was his nature to be boastful, as Bill had been; but the interest seemed rather to do him good in the way of helping him to overcome his boastful nature. After bragging about it awhile, he said:

"Reckin I must need more help 'n other folks, or folks wouldn't give it ter me."

The president said: "You centre your hopes in Bill; this boy is my hope. Would that we had a hundred like him here!"

"Let us sum up the work of the last three years," I said to him, "and see what we have done."

"Very well," he replied; and he made it a matter of figures. "Five years ago the school closed with seven pupils. It was a country school with a nominal attendance. The following year the attendance was seventy-five.

"Three years ago at commencement, we had a hundred. That year Bill entered, you remember, and it was then that we classified the school and increased the teaching force. The year after, your work was followed by greater success. Other crackers entered, and the

number of students increased to a hundred and twenty. This year they will number one hundred and seventy-five; and there is another marked evidence of success—one cracker child, the first, has entered and is doing well. This shows that the sentiment of the people is changing."

"Sam's being in school is due to Bill's influence," I said.

"That is true. Five years ago there was a two-room school-house; now there is a handsome college building, with class-rooms requisite for a large faculty. Then there were no appliances for the best work; now there are ample appliances for the most progressive teachers. While you have been going out in the mountains, bringing in the crackers, I have been preparing a place for them. Five years ago the manners of the students were barbarous; now they are the manners of ladies and gentlemen. Then the sentiment of the people was opposed to education, and the labors of the indolent crackers were directed toward destroying the work; now they do not oppose our efforts, and are beginning to help us. Five years ago the attendance upon church services was small; now it is comparatively large. The progress is very marked, and if we do nothing more, we may feel that we have already done much."

"That is true, but there is much yet to be done. Let us turn the horoscope now and see the prospect. A young man who a few years back, laughed in a crackerish way at the pleadings of one who begged him to consider his own needs, has advanced, and is now himself pleading with others; an old man who stopped his ears and shook his head at the same pleadings, stands with bowed head in listening attitude; a child who, near the cracker boy and the old man, sat catching flies, has advanced with them, and has books under his arm. Other children are watching him, and stop for a moment their idle amusement. That is the present case. The future shows a vast number following their leader to a building

on the hill, the home of children and of youth. The old man stands off and smiles, and seems happy to watch the columns. They are orderly and move in ranks, but now and then a boy or girl stops to pluck a flower. I look up at the building; a large procession is leaving it. It stops and salutes the advancing column, and then marches on, and men and women take their stand for life. I see merchants, farmers, doctors, lawyers, clergymen, reformers, scientists, philosophers, writers, inventors, men occupying state and national positions, and they all look back at the building on the hill with gratitude. But between the cast of the present and the future are many obstacles. In one place there is a still, and the ground corn is dripping its poison. Near this is a 'grocery,' into which men walk erect, and out of which they come staggering. Not far off a man is stamping counterfeit coin, while a boy counts it as it falls, and places it in a bag. When the bag is full, the boy takes it in his hand and goes. In front of these are detectives, prisoners, and condemned men. Further on, there are churches. This can scarcely be said to be the cast of the horoscope. It is plain reason that is stronger than fortune. The stills, groceries, and counterfeiters' dens must be closed before we can hope for perfect success. If McCabe could be convinced that it is his duty to help break up this horrible traffic that he once engaged in, what a power he would be!"

"No," my friend said, "we could not induce him to help. He belonged, and probably yet belongs, to the whitecaps, and many of them are moonshiners. His life might be the cost, and his help might not be effectual."

"Do you know that he is a whitecap?"

"I am sure of it."

"Well, we must work alone then as yet," said I. "The surest way is to convince these men of the evil they are doing themselves and the world; but that is slow success."

CHAPTER XXX.

Little Sam had become the pet of the school. He would come tugging along every morning with his books under his arm and his bucket in his hand. He wore long pants and a curious little straw hat. Everybody watched for his coming.

"Here comes my boy," the president would say, to encourage him; and Sam would lift the curious little straw hat respectfully.

He had not been to school for several days, and I asked Bill where he was.

"Sam ain't very well," he replied; "I'm afraid he's goin' to be real sick."

The president and I went to see him that afternoon.

"Sam, I do not visit well people much," my friend said, "but I hear you are sick, and I have come to see you."

"I's sorry not ter be ter school, 'Fessor; I wanted ter come, but mam wouldn't lemme. I feel sorter bad. I've been keepin' up at home, though," and he showed him the lesson he had learned that day. "Hear it 'Fessor, please, an' see how much I know;" and my friend heard him recite.

I took his hand in mine. His flesh was hot and his pulse quick and irregular. It was not the season for fever, but I felt anxious.

"Don't come to school to-morrow, Sam," my friend said. "Wait until you are perfectly well. I think you can keep up with your class very well, too, without studying at home. Don't tire yourself."

"That child is about to have typhoid fever," I said

"I am afraid so," he replied.

The next day Bill said he was no better, and I told him to consult a physician. He did so. The day following he said to me:

"Mr. Ramla, the doctor says that Sam's got the fever."

"What kind?" I asked.

"I dunno; he just said fever."

Bill stopped school to nurse his little brother, and my friend and I often went to see the child. The whole school wanted to go, but were forbidden.

"He will recover, Doctor?" I asked.

"It is impossible to tell. The outcome of typhoid is always doubtful."

The first week he was bright, and there seemed scarcely any danger, but the fever was high. He wanted my friend by him all the time, and every day when school had been out long enough for my friend to get there, the boy called for him. I asked him if I would not do.

"Naw; Bill's your boy, Mr. Ramla; I'm 'Fessor's boy, an' I don't think he min's comin' ter see me. Do you, 'Fessor?"

Of course my friend said, "No." He read stories to the little fellow, and tried in many ways to amuse him.

I had been with him by sick beds before, but I never saw him manifest so much anxiety. He loved the child for his personal attractions, and because he was a beacon light.

Bill was so anxious that it was not well for him to be near the boy. He showed his feelings too plainly.

"Bill, don't look so sorrowful; I'm goin' ter git well."

Then the tears would come into Bill's eyes and he would have to leave the room. His mother showed her feelings plainly, too, and I nursed the child a good deal to save both them and him.

Once he said to me; "I believe I'm your boy, too, as well as Bill."

The second week he was no better and yet no worse, except that he was growing weaker. He was delirious at times, and the doctor told me if there should be a change for the worse the following week he would probably never be conscious again.

"You think he will not recover, then?" I said.

"It is very doubtful. The chances are against him and if his family wish to talk to him they had better do it now, but not in such a way as to frighten him."

I told his mother and Bill, but they could say nothing without exciting the child and making him delirious. They tried several times.

Then Bill said: "Mam, we'll murder Sam if we don't stop. Let somebody else say what we want to say. I have never been a Christian, but I mean to be, and I want Sam to die right."

I told my friend to speak to the child, and he did:

"Sam, don't you want to hear a story—a sweet quiet story?"

"Yes, 'Fessor, talk to me 'bout it."

"It is about a little boy like you who lived long, long ago, almost two thousand years ago. He was born in a little village across the sea, and when he was your age he lived in a town called Nazareth. This little boy was a good child—the best boy in all Nazareth. He never did anything wrong, and when other boys were bad, people would say, 'Be like Jesus;' and when he would play with other boys, and they would be angry or cross, Jesus would say, 'Boys, don't do that; that is wrong.' Then, when he grew to be a man he started out in the world to teach people to be good; and one man called another and told him what a good man had come from Nazareth to teach people, and the other one asked, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' The one who had spoken first said, 'Come and see.' To see him was all that was necessary to know that he was good. He helped people all he could; he healed the sick, and made blind people see, and deaf people hear, and he was good

to everybody. He would take little boys on his lap and tell them what they should know, and they were so glad there was such a man. So for three years he taught the people daily."

"Better'n you, 'Fessor?" the child asked.

"Better than any other man; and he told the people that he had come down from heaven to tell them how to live and how to die, and that everybody who believed what he said, and lived as he taught them, would be saved; and that after death he was going to heaven, and would take all others there if they would trust him and do right. He told them what a beautiful place heaven is, and that he was going to get it ready for them. What is the prettiest place you ever saw, Sam?"

"The college."

"Well, Jesus has gone to a prettier place, more beautiful than any you can think of, and all grown people, and all little boys and girls who will may go with him when they leave this world. There is room for every one. Do you believe this story, Sam?"

"Yes, 'Fessor, because you tell it."

"Do you believe what Jesus said because he told it, and wants you to believe it?"

"Yes."

"Then it will be all right. Now, we'll pray to Jesus of Nazareth, and tell him how you feel, and ask him to help you."

And he made a simple prayer, that any child could have understood, to the great Life that he had portrayed, for the little life that seemed so near its close.

Sam dropped asleep, and all the room was calm and peaceful. When he awoke, he was conscious, and seemed to be better; but there was no change, the doctor said.

At the end of the second week, however, a change came, and during the whole of the third week Sam was unconscious. The night of the twentieth day we watched him closely. Sometimes the respiration was

very quick, then very slow, as if tired of the effort. There was no hope of his recovery; everyone realized that.

At four o'clock in the morning of the twenty-first day he opened his eyes, and they shone with a new light.

"Mam, Bill, 'Fessor, Mr. Ramla," he said, distinctly, "I'm goin' ter be with the good little boy of Naz'reth—an' I'm goin' ter be good, too, in that beautiful place—what's prettier 'n the college—an' the little boy 'll teach me——"

He closed his eyes, smiled sweetly, and when the morning dawned he had gone to be with the Child. Who knows but that the Nazarene Boy stood by and hushed the tired spirit into slumber? Certainly it seemed so; for there was none of the horror of death, and when we had dressed him in his strange little costume, he never seemed more natural or wore a sweeter expression. It seemed almost wrong to grieve, almost like grieving at another's joy.

My friend said simply: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The people began to flock in, and I feared it would be like that other occasion when death had entered this home.

Bill said: "I don't want folks here to-night, 'cept us and you and pr'fessor. It would be like disturbing his rest." So he said to the people present: "We're mighty glad you come, but we want ter be with Sam by ourselves this last night. I hope you won't be mad. It's just our way of lookin' at the matter."

Some left angry, saying the Collinses had no gratitude, especially Bill. Others said, "Well, Bill's kinder cur'us;" others said he was right.

The night passed quietly. There was no loud grief, but a quiet watch, as if we desired the presence of little Sam. We read of the blessing to little children, and had prayer, such as my friend had offered before, full of

hope, trust, submission, and of gratitude for the goodness of Him who promised to all such a peaceful entrance into the Beyond, and reunion and fuller life. And then we talked of the boy and his new existence.

The next day the friends of the family came again, and all the students of the college were there. In the afternoon we laid him to rest. The school asked the privilege of burying him. Boys of his size were pallbearers, and my friend conducted the funeral services with beautiful mention of the little life. He was buried by his father, and the grave was covered with arbutus blossoms.

Bill was very sad afterwards for a long time. I do not think he has ever gotten entirely over little Sam's death; but, as he said, it was "a sin to grieve; and so selfish, too, Mr. Ramla, since it's my loss, and not his."

My friend said he had not been so affected for years, nor felt so keenly the sense of loss.

"The boy's place must be filled in the school, if possible," he said; and I went at once to see Mr. Sims.

"Mr. Sims will you not send your boy to school now? You have seen how much beloved little Sam Collins was. He was the pet and hope of the entire school."

"I ain't er goin' ter send him ef he's goin' ter git fever an' die. The school was pow'rful 'tentive, an' 'twas all mighty nice, but I don't want my chap ter die ter git 'tention."

"The attention shown at the burial, Mr. Sims, was only a mark of affection. The whole school loved Sam in life."

"Mebbe so, but he got fever over thar at Warlesky."

"I do not think so," I said; and I talked to him a long time about his child.

He promised to send him at once, and did.

Bill could scarcely bear the child's presence in the school at first, but he got over the feeling after a while, and was very kind to the boy.

The students tried to pet little Bob Sims, but he was never beloved as Sam Collins had been. The school felt the impress of the sad death for months. Just at the end of the term, however, a circumstance of very different character stirred it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

One morning when the presiding elder of the district was at Walesca, my friend sent for me. I went immediately, and found that a poor boy who was educating himself had lost fifty dollars. He said that it had been stolen out of his trunk, and accused Lewis of the theft. The elder had preached the night before, and the young man thought the money had been taken while he was at church. He gave the following account:

"About a week ago Lewis came to my room and saw me go in my trunk and take five dollars from my purse. 'You seem to have a lot of money,' he said. 'No,' I assured him, 'just a little, but it's all I have, and will have to take me through next year.' 'Why can't you make more this summer?' he asked. I told him 'Because I must help father on the place this summer and he can't afford to pay me for it; it isn't right that he should either. You see, he gives me one summer and I make enough to go to school two years, and then I stay at home and help him the next year.' 'Aren't you twenty-one years old? You are not obliged to work for your father at all,' he said. 'Lewis, aren't you ashamed of yourself?' I asked; and he replied, 'No; every fellow for himself in this world. Simpson, let me have that money, I need money badly now, and you will not want that before fall.' 'No,' I answered. 'Why don't you go to work and make money for yourself.' 'I am going to, but I need fifty dollars before I can do a thing; my brother is in New York, and has written me if I go there he will get me a situation. I can't afford to go to school any longer, and I have no money to go to

New York on; if you will lend me fifty dollars I will pay it back long before fall; come, Simpson, do a fellow a kindness.' 'I'd like to help you, Lewis, but I do not know what might happen before fall; borrow from some one who is better able to lend.' That afternoon he and Callaway both came and begged me for the money. Callaway said Lewis was obliged to have it, but I told them no. Lewis had a fine overcoat that some one had given him, and he wanted to pawn that. I refused under any circumstances to let him have the money, and they both left angry. Lewis said, 'You will suffer for it yet, Simpson; people who are too mean to help their friends, always suffer for their meanness.' Last night I went to church with a friend, but not before I had locked the trunk and my room. On the way we met Lewis. 'Aren't you going to church?' I asked. 'No, I'm sick, and Professor has excused me.' 'You had better go back and get your money,' my friend said, and I would have gone, but the second church bell was then ringing and I had no time. I was so impressed with the sermon I forgot to look for the money when I got home, but it turned cool in the night, and I felt the air from my window. I remembered putting the window down before I went to church, and I did not remember raising it after coming home. I examined the window and found a pane of glass broken. I thought of the money, then, and looked in my trunk. The lock was broken and the money gone. Some one had been in the room, and I am sure it was Lewis. I want to get a warrant for him immediately, but Professor objects to it. He says I ought not to make a public matter of it, but that he will go with me and talk to Lewis, and demand the money. What do you think is best? When a man is as mean as that I think he ought to suffer for it.'

"Suppose you keep a sharp watch over Lewis and see that he does not leave town, Mr. Simpson, until I can talk to the president and we decide what is best."

Simpson left, and my friend and I talked the matter over. Said he:

"It is a terrible thing to subject a young man like Lewis to the law. He may be saved by mild means, but if tried and made to serve a term in the penitentiary he will become thoroughly hardened. There is little hope for a man imprisoned for crime. It is a fearful thing for a young man just starting in life to be punished so severely. It does not give him a good impression of the religion that should be patient and long-suffering; and say what you will about the world, it always looks down on a man who has worn the stripes."

"That is true," I said, 'but what will you do with the law? It is of no good if not enforced, and then you must remember that, in protecting one, you are causing many to suffer. Lewis might be saved, but in the meantime many others will suffer grievously. Law is for the protection of the whole. I think you have borne long enough with Lewis. In any case he cannot be allowed to remain in the school any longer."

"Your interpretation of the law is not entirely right. Lewis might steal a hundred thousand dollars, but that is nothing to the loss of a soul and a useful life, such as his might become. However, my theory may be wrong; it is not popular, at least. Go and tell Simpson to have a warrant issued; but it does not seem to me to be quite Christ-like."

"You are the one to decide the matter; the responsibility is with you. You must tell Simpson yourself," I said.

"Ah! that is what is the matter; the *responsibility* is with me, and all under my influence will be affected by my action."

We went out together; the warrant was issued, and Lewis arrested. Fifty dollars was found on his person, and he acknowledged the theft. He had intended to leave for New York on the early morning train, and was preparing to go when he saw Simpson watching

him, and affected unconcern. He pleaded for mercy, said he had committed the theft in his extremity, and was willing to refund the money and acknowledge his guilt if Simpson would not let the law take its course. But the matter had passed out of Simpson's hands.

"Professor, I know you have a right to feel that some of your suspicions of me are proving just, but I appeal to your goodness that has caused you to bear with me so long to help me now. Go on my bond. I cannot bear to be put in jail."

He cried like a child, but my friend could not go on his bond. All that he had possessed he had given to the school. So Lewis was taken to Canton and imprisoned.

The next day my friend asked me to go to the opening exercises of the school. He lectured for some time upon the occurrence of the day before, and closed by saying that, according to the law of the college, it had become necessary for the faculty to expel Lewis. I never knew a man with as tender a heart and as strong a will as my friend had. His sympathies were bleeding in Lewis' behalf, but for the influence over the school he took this action. It was a very solemn occasion. The school was asked to stand, and Lewis was openly expelled.

Callaway sat very near me. When he arose he trembled fearfully, and leaned against his desk for support; his face was as ashes, his lips even were colorless; he looked like a man who was hearing his own sentence. Surely, I thought, he loved Lewis much, *or he was his accomplice.*

We wrote to Lewis' family of his trouble, but it was some days before they could go to Canton and arrange for his bail.

In the interval, the detective whom we had consulted said to me:

"I have obtained a search warrant for Lewis' room; he will doubtless skip the country when he gets bail, and

I have suspected him for some time of complicity in this counterfeiting business; I can now find out if he is guilty."

We went through Lewis' trunk and found a tin box locked. We opened it, and found letters from a counterfeiter in New York. They bore date for two years, and a few coins of different values were enclosed. The counterfeiter said that he sent sample money that it might be tried to see if it would pass without trouble. He promised to furnish his accomplice large sums should he be successful. Lewis had apparently tried for two years with indifferent success, and had taken the money from Simpson for the purpose of going north, and would probably go somewhere else afterwards to pass counterfeit money. "I will expect you or your companion on the 15th of May," the last letter, dated May 13th, ran, "and we will fix up our affair." The letters were not addressed to Lewis, but to an old man, Jake Nicely, a shrewd cracker, an uncle of the moonshiner. There were also letters from Lewis' brother, begging him to come to New York, and he would get him a situation. These had no connection with the counterfeit business. At the bottom of the trunk, in a chamois skin, I found my grandfather's watch.

My friend went to see Lewis in jail, and told me that he seemed perfectly wild at not being bailed out. I told my friend of the discovery that had been made while he was in Canton. No wonder Lewis was anxious to get bail. When his friends came to offer bond for him, however, the detective and sheriff went to the court-room and re-arrested Lewis on the graver charges of burglary and counterfeiting.

His friends could not offer sufficient bond this time, and he was carried back to jail. Jake Nicely was also arrested; many suspected Callaway, but it was impossible to find any ground for his arrest.

The trials for counterfeiting came off in July. The evidence went to show that Nicely had Lewis circulate

the money, and was going to send him to New York. Lewis, however, would not be duped by having the letters addressed to him. He would probably have been sent to prison for a term of years but for a rich uncle who paid Nicely to take the blame. The latter had nothing to lose in character, and would certainly be condemned, so he took the money. Of course, this was not known to the court. Lewis gave evidence in his own behalf that Nicely had brought the tin box locked, saying that he had no place to keep some valuable papers, and asked Lewis to take care of them for him. Nicely testified that this was true, and that he did not wish Lewis to read the papers, and kept them locked from him. The jury could not reject this testimony, and they found Nicely guilty, and he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, while Lewis was acquitted.

The case of burglary was not tried during that term and Lewis was bailed. He skipped the country immediately, and his bondsman paid the bail.

Not long after the trial Callaway was in my room, and I asked him if he had heard from Lewis.

"Yes," he said, "once," but as his friend had fallen into such shame he thought it wiser not to have anything further to do with him, and he had not answered his letter.

I asked him if he knew where he was. He did not, he replied. I showed him the watch.

"Did you ever see Lewis with this?" I asked.

He looked somewhat taken back, but said he had never seen it before. I showed him the name.

"It is easily recognizable, you see; it was taken from a trunk in my room when the president was at my house sick some time in January of last year."

"Lewis was in the town in which you live when Professor was sick. I remember his telling me he wanted to go and see him."

"You were at home then, Mr. Callaway?" I asked.

"No sir, I was here. You remember I came before Lewis did that year."

"Yes, only a day or two, though, I think; my impression is that you were not here then."

He answered confusedly; "Well, maybe I was at home," and the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Bill was now in the sophomore class, and among the many exercises required by the teacher of English was writing poetry. I asked the teacher if this was not a waste of time. He said no, it cultivated a pure sentiment, and it was one of the many duties of a teacher to do that. One day Bill brought me one of his productions.

"There's not much in it, but it's how I feel," he said.

I laughed and told him he might regret his syllogism if he studied logic.

After reading it I asked :

"Where did you get this sentiment, Bill? You must have been reading Byron. Women are generally thought to be more constant than men, and this poem is the feeling of an old, experienced man, whose life has become saddened and somewhat embittered because some woman has rejected him."

"Well, I'm not old, but I sometimes feels so, and what you say has been my experience. The sweetest, purest girl in the world has rejected me, and nothing seems the same."

"But you do not know that Mol is inconstant," I said.

"I'm sure of it. She would have let me hear before now if she felt the same."

Katherine said to me one day: "Father, the Professor of English says that Bill is the best writer in the sophomore class."

"He brought me some poetry to read the other day," I said. "and it expressed deep sentiment, and was well written."

"Oh! he is developing wonderful talent as an essay writer. His attempts at poetry are spasmodic, the professor says, and not nearly so good as his prose. He has a philosophical mind. And have you not noticed how improved his expression in conversation is? He does not butcher English half so much as he used to."

I had noticed the change in Bill, but I was not as surprised as she. I had looked anxiously for the development for four years, always believing that it would come.

My friend said to me: "I confess I have never believed in Bill as you have, but now I must acknowledge his capacity. The boy has a wonderful brain."

Before the close of each term, it had been the custom to have a series of revival meetings, and many of the students were converted each time. This year the meetings were conducted by my friend and a noted evangelist. Everybody seemed to help in feeling, if not openly. Among those who were converted was Bill; I had felt anxious about his Christian life, though I thought he was a boy of high appreciation of duty.

"I've been thinkin' about it ever since Sam died," he said, "and I am glad to be able to make up my mind now. What is conversion, Mr. Ramla?"

"It is a conviction of wrong-doing, and a strong determination to live right."

"That's what I think. Now, what is living right?"

"Just as Christ lived, as far as you can—living up to your higher nature."

"That is what I think too," he said; "nothing less."

One Sunday afternoon, shortly after this, I met McCabe on the street; and said: "Mr. McCabe, will you not come to church to-night?"

"I though I'd come," he replied.

I watched for him, and early the great, tall form came boldly in. My friend preached one of his most impressive sermons, tender and loving, with not a word

of condemnation. Surely if the gospel means anything, it means glad tidings.

McCabe arose and came to the front.

"I have wanted fur er long time ter hear how Christ preached. The las' time I wus in church they told me that the likes o' me wus condemned forever, but somehow I felt that Jesus would 'a' preached different. I've been hunted down all my life. I'm glad thar's er religion that don't want ter keep people down all the time, an' don't believe thar's nothing good in 'm. I've been er still-keeper, but ef there's enny chance fur me now, I want ter live right. If thar's enny moonshiners here, I want ter tell 'm moonshinin's er bad business; more'n that, I've made up my mind ter do ever'thin' ag'in stills. They're er curse ter enny country, government or blind wuns. I can't break up the government wuns, but I kin wuk on the others. Now, if thar's enny man I ain't done jes' right by, I want him ter know I'm sorry, an' I'm goin' ter do better. Now if thar's enny way fur er man like me what's been so mean but wants ter be good, ter be saved, help me ter that way, Professor."

My friend here gave out the words, "Just as I am, I come," and the congregation sang that beautiful hymn. The great work had been done. Three years ago an outlaw, now a Christian. I had not felt so happy in years as when I thought then of Bill and McCabe, and when they both told me I had been a help to them I heard the herald of eternity whisper of its joys.

Katherine graduated that year, and I felt very proud of her. Truly, if "sorrows come not single spies," neither do joys. I thought that at first she would remain at home after this, but we all decided it would be better for her to go back, as she would be able to do more than ever for the people.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

When we returned in the fall, Bill told me that he was happier than he had been since Mol left.

"I was going home about dark the other day, and I met a queer-lookin' man I never saw before, sorter like McCabe, and he said: 'Young man, it's a pity you let another man cheat you out of so much happiness, especially when the man's a rascal;' and I asked him what he meant, and he said, 'Think what I mean.' I suppose he referred to Callaway's winning Mol, and I couldn't help that. The next day I received a letter from her, but I couldn't tell a thing about the postmark or where to send one to her. The letter contained hopeful news. 'I told you when I left to trust me; you have not done that. Women are faithful, but men never are, and you do not trust me because you are proving false.' It was mighty bad on me, but I was glad to know that she was true, and I thought she'd find out I was some day. I showed it to Callaway, and he said, either Mol didn't write it, or she was false to him. How do you think I can get a letter to her? You reckon that man that met me knows anything about it?"

I thought it very likely that he did, and I told Bill that I would be on the lookout for the man, and find out from him what he knew of Mol.

It was months, however, before I saw him. In December, though, I came across him, and asked him to talk to me a few moments.

"You advise me not to seek to discover your identity, and I have taken no pains to learn it. Without doubt, if I had made any great effort, I could have learned, and might have given you trouble, for a man

does not usually conceal his identity unless he is in danger."

"Don't speak without reason," he said. "Men conceal their identity sometimes for the greater good they may do unknown than known, and for various other reasons."

"Well, I have not made any effort to learn yours, and in consideration of my not having disturbed you in your work, I want to ask a kindness of you."

"I will be glad to do you a kindness, but when you speak of considerations, they are not on one side. I have not interfered in *your* work."

"Pardon my ingratitude," I said somewhat stiffly. "We will pass over considerations, and I will *beg* of you a kindness. You seem to know the private affairs of everyone in this country; it is a questionable business digging into personal matters, but since you engage in it, turn it to good."

He was livid. How had I angered him so? But, to tell the truth, though I admired the man, I was disgusted with him for making insight into private matters his occupation. He replied hotly:

"Your comments are unworthy of you, but I suppose, when a man places himself in a doubtful position he must answer for it."

He rose, showed a belt of pistols, and held one in my face before I could rise.

"Oh! I have no desire to engage in a pistol fight," I said.

"Few men have with me; you are not eccentric in that."

"I did not mean to comment too severely upon your work. Your motives may be good."

He replaced the pistol in his belt.

"I would not shoot a man who could not defend himself. Tell me what kindness you would ask, and I will consider granting it."

"You know where Mollie Smith is. It would be a

great kindness to her mother and friends if you would say."

"It would be a great kindness to Miss Smith for me not to say, conceding that I know."

"So she would doubtless consider it, but it is questionable if it would be so. Her mother is growing old and feeble. Better than doctors and medicine would be a knowledge of where Mollie is, and better than renewed youth it would be to see her once again."

"Miss Smith has surely thought of these things, and against them has weighed the secret of her absence and whatever of good is involved in it. I have taken no trouble to find out anything about her. She is a good girl, though, and I did her a kindness once. In memory of it she told me where she was going, and to let her know of any change here for good or ill. It is strange that a boy of Bill's sense in other things should allow himself to believe anything that a man like Callaway says."

"Callaway seems a better man in every respect, and Bill has come to believe him. I, too, have thought his story of Mol plausible."

"Then you are as foolish as Bill. Callaway is one of the deceptive kind that knows how to impose upon credulous people. Out of his doubts of Mol's constancy, Bill will acquire a contempt for her, and will consider her ignorance and other deficiencies, which he has not yet realized, and prove untrue himself. Callaway is undermining his affection, and Bill has not been able to see it."

"I confess I have never thought of it."

"Then look into these things, Callaway would like to say to Mol, 'You see what sort of man Bill Collins is; when he was ignorant, you were the wife he sought; now that he is educated, he aspires higher; but I, with family and social prestige, and education superior, am yet true.' And when she believes him, he will say; 'You ought to have known that I could never marry

you; I only wanted to show Bill that I could win you from him.' The only sting that Callaway has ever had has been that a cracker could keep the affections of a girl he made an effort to win."

"I thought I was a judge of character," I said, "but I cannot look into men's hearts and discover their motives in this way."

"I am accustomed to it from hard dealings with them," he replied.

"Now," I said, "if you really think this is true, and if you know where Mol is, and she has asked you to look after her interests, you will surely tell her."

"I shall tell as much as seems to me best—no more; Bill received a letter recently from her."

"Yes."

"Well, what I have said is true," he continued; "if Bill cannot stand the test he is unworthy of his sweetheart."

"As you see it," I said; "but you must remember that Bill is young and inexperienced, and has not learned to judge character so well."

"I have considered that, or he would never have received the letter. He has to learn by experience, though, and if you tell him these things you will be doing both Mol and himself an injury. Let his character show itself. Experience alone develops that. I exact from you a promise not to tell Bill what I have told you."

A strange man, indeed! How well he knew, how closely and yet how justly he judged the world! He was right; men should be tested. All life is a test, and character never shows itself so plainly as when the test is strongest.

"Bill," I said, the next time we met, "the lines you showed me some time ago revealed a deep sentiment, but it was sickly. I think you had better not write in that strain again. Be practical and vigorous in life; do not give way to any form of weakness."

"I do not quite understand you," he said.

"I will repeat what the queer-looking stranger that you met on the mountain said: 'Think what I mean.' "

One day I took Katherine to McCabe's home. His wife was thin and pale and careworn. She looked like a woman who had not received the best treatment; she was nervous and watchful, as if expectant of danger.

"It's no wonder she's so," McCabe said. "She has fur twenty year had cause ter be. When I tuk her, Miss Katherine, she didn't know I kep' er still; she never 'proved o' whiskey, an' many er time whin the revenue men was 'round she'd try ter tell 'bout the still, an' 'd tell me she wus goin' ter tell, so I could git away. She was desperate, I led her such er life. But I'd keep her locked up close. Many are the times I's throw'd her 'cross this room, too, whin I'd be drinkin' an' mad; an' wunst I broke both her arms, an' she was sick er long time, an' I 'most wish she'd die. She'd try ter go ter church sometimes, but I'd ketch her an' bring her back. Thim times is over now, though she ain't realized it yit, seems so uncommon ter her; but she will."

He put his arm around his wife, and stroked her care-furrowed brow.

"The chillun what she wanted ter be good I've brung up mos'ly bad. Some has died 'caze they wus ill treated, but this boy," taking his baby in his arms, "I'll bring up right and true. Nobody shan't say McCabe ain't got wun child what's er man. An' now 'bout them stills, Mr. Ramla."

Mrs. McCabe and Katherine went into another room and McCabe kept on:

"Thar's twenty-seven o' 'm, an' they's all run by men I know. They's turned ag'in' me now, 'caze I told 'm I wus goin' ter stop the traffic. I'll have ter look out fur myself. Thar ain't no use in havin' er big fuss. The bes' way is ter see the man what owns near all o' the stills and git him ter give up his bizness. I know him. He don't keer 'bout nothin' but the money that's in it, an' ef we could git somebody ter buy him out at

er big price an' break it all up, 'twould be hard fur the stills ter build up ag'in. He owns most o' the places whar the corn an' fruit 's raised, an' ef you could buy 'm, the moonshiners would sure be bad off. They ain't rich; they're 'rested an' fined too much ter save. You see, this man makes 'm take all the risk an' pay the fines, an' nobody don't know he's got nothin' ter do with 't. He's er chirch member, too, an' that's the reason I ain't had much confidence in chirch members 'fore now. You see ef you can't git good folks ter buy him out."

"Would it not be best to prosecute him? It is a shame for a man like that to impose upon the public."

"He's too smart fur you. You couldn't ketch him. The only thing ter do is ter tell him you hear he's got fine farmin' land, an' er company wants ter buy him out. You'd have ter offer him er big price, though, 'caze he makes er lot o' money by the stills."

"I am inclined to prosecute him."

"Well, you kin try it, but he'll law you out o' it."

"I will think over it, Mr. McCabe, and talk to my friend, and will see you again soon."

Katherine had come out to go, and after a cordial exchange of words, we left.

"Mrs. McCabe is such an interesting woman," Katherine said. "Her life has been sad indeed. She told me something of it, but she did not speak as freely as her husband. She has a good deal of refinement, and belongs to a good family. She wants all the children to come to school next year, she said; and they have one little girl who looks so much like her mother, whom she wants me to exert some influence over. She is coming to me every Saturday, and I will see if I cannot be worthy of the trust. See if I do not make a woman of her."

The chief objection I had to Katherine's staying at Walesca was that the work was causing her to mature too rapidly. She felt responsibility and care too much.

I feared she would skip the period of girlhood and be all a woman after she was more than a child. She had been very girlish when she first came, but was growing less so every day. I questioned at times if it was right to keep her; but womanhood is a strange thing for a man to object to. I thought sometimes then that it could come too soon; I doubt now if it can.

The little McCabe girl came regularly, and she would tell strange, sad stories sometimes of her past life. We kept them sacred. Her experiences seemed, in all their horror, to have made a fascinating impression upon her. She would tell her stories in the wildest manner, with voice and gesture as children like to tell tales of ghosts. The little spirit needed quieting.

"Kitty," I said to her once, "that time has passed. Suppose you talk about home as it is now."

"Oh! it's er heap nicer now;" then she shook her head, "but I'll never forgit how it use-ter be."

Ah! reform as we may, the memory of the past remains.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I consulted with my friend as to the course to pursue in regard to the man who owned the stills. He thought that McCabe's was the surest way, so I wrote to several wealthy men about the matter. They all said, "Prosecute him; the government provides for such a case as that." There was little or no sympathy with McCabe's idea, and I told McCabe so.

"Let the matter rest er bit, thin. Mebbe you'll come across somebody yit. I could git rid o' the stills in quick order, but they'd be built up ag'in. That man that's at the head o' 'm is the wun to work with, an' not the moonshiners direct."

"You would testify to his connection with the stills in court?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, I'd testify; but that'd be all. Nobody 'd b'lieve me, an' he's fixed ter git 'round the law."

"The whitecaps," I said, "are dealing with a great many people. I wonder they do not call this man to account."

"Thar's no tellin' 'bout the whitecaps, Mr. Ramla."

I had never seen the man who owned the stills or had an interest in them, and after some consideration I thought it best to do so, taking a letter of introduction from my friend.

After I had introduced myself, he said:

"You are doing a good work at Walesca, they tell me—revolutionizing mountain life, and making gentlemen and scholars of crackers. I have been anxious to see the man who can do that; I am glad, indeed, to know you," he said.

"I have labored for four years with the people try-

ing to help them. The condition is certainly improved; I am open in saying so because I have not labored alone. The school is really doing the work. My good friend, the president of the college, merits most praise," I replied.

"Your friend and mine merits much praise," he said. "He is a wonderful man; but he who has gone out into the highways and hedges deserves credit too." He smiled graciously.

Surely he was a charming man, I thought, and then laughed at myself. We are apt to consider men charming when they endorse us. I said:

"Well, perhaps the people should have most praise for responding to our appeals. Many have responded readily, and many others would, I think, be persuaded to consider their own interests, were it not that a very great barrier exists, and it is that which I have come to-day to ask your help in removing."

"With pleasure, if it is in my power. I have long wanted to do my little for so good a cause," he responded, "but my good friend has slighted me in his calls, and I have felt some modesty in offering. Let me anticipate your need now, however. You are building a chapel; I have heard of it." He had been writing while speaking. "Allow me," he continued, handing me a check for a thousand dollars.

"This is kind, indeed," I said; "the exchequer of the college is low and needs replenishing. But it was not of money I came to speak to you to-day. It was of a need more urgent still."

He laughed:

"I thought that was the sum of all our needs."

"It is a great factor, but not the sum," I said. "There is an evil to be overcome in the mountains. Will you help us overcome it?"

"Your question is not quite fair. In a general way, I might say that I would help you overcome any evil, but, specifically, I might not be able to do so. I have

already said it would be my pleasure to help you in any way in my power. I repeat that."

"I do not hesitate to say, then, that it is in your power, possibly more than in any other person's, to help materially in uprooting the terrible evil of illicit distilling in the mountains."

"How, sir, is it in my power? I do not visit your place once a year, and I really know very little about that section. Are there many blind stills?"

"A great many," I answered; "I am told there are twenty-seven."

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed. "Why do you not call on the revenue officers? I can assist you a little in that just now, perhaps. An officer is in town to-day, and you can send him there immediately. You know these men become as desperate as the moonshiners, and it would be fun for them to get into a nest of twenty-seven stills. Shall I send for the officer?" he said, with his hand on the bell.

"It is useless," I answered; "the revenue officers have been there many times, and all that they can do is to arrest the moonshiners and take them to Atlanta to be fined or imprisoned. The stills go on again as soon as the moonshiners return. We have had a great deal of trouble. Do you not remember the conspiracy and the murder of an officer some years ago. Though the conspirators were brought to justice, the nefarious business goes on."

"Yes, I remember. McCabe was not hung, either. He ought to have been," he said.

"So many thought at that time," I replied. "Do you know that he has become a Christian, and is now living an honest, upright life?"

"No, I did not know it; and you will pardon me for saying that you do not know it yet. You do not know how many blind stills he runs under the garb of a correct outward life."

"No," I replied, "I think McCabe is in earnest. He

is an open man. He was open as an outlaw. But you are right—it is impossible to judge a man's heart; and many men do live double lives."

He changed color.

"Well, Mr. Ramla, I am very sorry for you, indeed. It must be trying beyond measure to carry on your work in the face of such an obstacle; but I really do not know what course to suggest, except to insist upon the government's being more vigilant. Individuals can do nothing, and the government should be more interested than you. I would like very much to assist you, but really you must see that I can do nothing."

"Do you not own land in that section?" I asked.

"Yes, I own quite a large tract upon Pine Log Mountain, but I know very little about the condition of it, I go there seldom. You surely do not want to enlarge the college possessions so much as to wish my land?"

"I wish the college could buy it," I said. "You rent it in small lots now, I believe?"

"Yes, rather small. The people cannot afford to rent much land."

"Do you know that more than half the blind stills on Pine Log Mountain are on your land?"

"I have feared those mountain folks could not be trusted; but when I rent land I am not supposed to know in what business my renters engage; and as I do not go to Walesca very often, I could not know everything that is done there."

"That is very true, but by actual count more than half the blind stills are on your land. That is why I have come to you to-day. Now, will you not say this to every renter, and help the crackers that much; 'I will rent you the land only on condition that you do not put an illicit still upon it?'"

"You ask a good deal, Mr. Ramla. I cannot afford not to rent the land."

"You could if you would do what I ask—your promise, sir," I said.

"I have not broken it. I cannot afford to lose my rents, and to do what you ask would be to lose them. Besides," he added, "moonshiners are without honor. I might exact such a promise, but they would break it."

"But you have the law to sustain you in that."

"So have you in breaking up the stills," he retorted.

"I appeal to you as a man interested in the elevation of humanity," I said.

"It is not necessary to make that appeal. It is my constant wish to elevate humanity, but I cannot do what you ask. I shall be glad, though, for you to take this check to aid you in your work."

"Does your land bring you so much? Could you not better afford to do what I ask?"

He knew what I meant when I asked if his land rented for so much.

"This is one gift; that would be continual giving beyond my means."

"I am sorry you think as you do," I said, and left him.

Some months after this I received a telegram from him, asking me to see him. I went, and found him very ill.

"I can live but a short time," he said. "Do not interrupt me in what I shall say. My words must be few. Twenty years ago I was made the guardian of two young girls. They had money and land. While they lived I saw that they were comfortable, but I never gave them the full interest on their money. I invested it for myself. Their land was a large tract on Pine Log Mountain, supposed to be rich in minerals. A mining syndicate offered a price for it conditioned upon the mineral actually taken out, but I refused to sell. I found that renting the land to moonshiners for shares in their profits, making them take all risks, and never allowing my name to be used if they were discovered, was the most profitable way to use the land. The two girls

died before either was of age or married. They left no relatives that could claim the land, and they willed it to me, giving their money to a charitable cause, but all the money never reached the cause for which they left it. I now confess my sin, and have willed to that cause the sum of fifteen thousand dollars. The land may be good for its ore. I have deeded it to the college at Walesca, except the homes of the moonshiners, which I give to them upon the condition that they will never distill another drop of whiskey there. If at any time a moonshiner to whom I have given his home should distill whiskey, his home is forfeited, to be used as you think best. You are shocked at the story of my life," he said; "I am shocked at it myself, and tremble for my account to be rendered at the last great tribunal. May the Great Judge be merciful, for mercy only can save me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

We appealed to the mining syndicate to make us an offer for the land, but after sinking several trial shafts, they concluded that the ore was not sufficiently productive to justify them in working it. This was a disappointment, because we had hoped that the moonshiners could be furnished with honorable work that would compensate them for their loss in the stills. Now the land is cultivated as farming land. The corn and fruit crops are large, and some revenue accrues from it. There is a fine grazing plot, too, which stock-raisers rent from the college. We still hope to develop the mining interests some day.

I made a round of visits after this. The rheumatic berry-gatherer's was the first home I entered. I thought at first that I had lost my bearings when I passed his old home. The cabin no longer stood; the serpent had not his covert in the weeds about the door; the place yielded crops like the one adjoining it. In fact, it was now a part of that well kept farm.

"Mr. Quinn, I hope you and Miss Betsey are well. You will pardon me for calling her so. I knew her some time before you were married, and it seems more natural."

"Oh! that's all right. I call her Miss Betsey sometimes myself. 'Pears more like she was, the way she bosses me 'round."

He laughed, and his cracked voice sounded queer.

"Now, Quinn, you know that ain't so. You ain't no henpecked man. 'Tain't worth while ter try ter make folks b'lieve you air, jes' 'caze I wouldn't let the weeds keep growin' over yonder where he use ter live, whin the place could raise better stuff."

"Ennything better'n blackberries?" the old man asked.

"Plenty o' things. I ain't got no time ter be pickin' berries, an' you's got too stiff ter do it.' Tain't er profitable bizness nohow. You never got rich at it. I jes' want 'nough ter presarve an' can."

"That place wus my home fur thirty year, Mr. Ramla, an' I hated ter see it changed. Don't seem the same no more. It's kinder like I'd moved ter er different country." After a moment's silence, he continued: "Thar's more things makes me feel like I wus on new land. The blind stills 's closin' up, an' the man what owned 'em made cur'us gifts o' his land."

"It's er good thing, Mr. Ramla," his wife said, "Quinn was too fond o' goin' behind stumps an' bushes ter git er bottle, 'scusin' it on his rheumatiz; I's glad o' it."

"Well, now, I dunno if it wus er good thing;—yes, I reckon 'twus, too. I didn't use ter think that way 'bout drinkin', but now my thoughts is different on the subject. Betsey, bring the boy here."

"He's asleep," she said, "Mr. Ramla kin come ter him."

I followed her into the house and stood by her side over a tiny board cradle, in which a splendid baby lay in innocent slumber.

"I want you ter make er man o' him over thar at the college some time; I'll try ter start him right at home," she said; and as I turned to go out of the room, "Mr. Ramla," she added, "Quinn an' me do love each other er lot, ef we do talk kinder cross."

I assured her that I knew them both too well not to know that.

"You can never afford to drink again, Mr. Quinn," I said.

"Naw, that's so; reckon I's glad it's gone."

Next I visited a house that I have not mentioned before—the home of a drunkard. I will not picture it. Those homes are too common.

"Well, you *have* done er great work. Don't talk ter me 'bout the great work you're doin' at the college no more," said a man, tottering from excitement and nervousness, and shaking his head and waving me away with his hand. "I don't b'lieve nothin' you do is good."

"Why, Mr. Black, what have I done to displease you so?" I asked.

"You know well 'nough. Ax me, indeed, what you done! You persuaded the man that owned the stills to break 'm up. Now, ef er man wants the stuff, he's got ter walk 'til he's sick ter git it. I don't b'lieve in tre'tin' folks that way."

"It is the kindest treatment you could receive," I said.

"'Cordin' ter the way you look at it," he said, and left the house in disgust.

"An' 'cordin to the way I look at it," his wife said. "I's so glad on 'count o' him;" and she thanked me.

They had a child that had periodic attacks of insanity. "How is Jimmy?" I asked.

"Oh! he's out ag'in."

"I am glad of that," I said.

"Oh! I thought perhaps you'd be sorry. You giner'ly seem sympathizin' like."

"I thought you said he was better?"

"Naw, I said he wus out."

"Oh!" catching her meaning, "I misunderstood you."

"Yes, the old man put him out by grumblin' so' bout the stills. He wus gittin' all right 'fore that. It's alurs been the old man that's put him out, an' I'm glad the stills is gone."

"Mr. Sims, I know you are pleased with Bob's progress in school. He is learning fast."

"So well pleased I's goin' ter send two more this fall. But, see here, Bob says thar ain't 's much made o' him 's thar wus o' Sam Collins."

"Well, Sam was Bill's brother, was one reason of that. Everybody likes Bill."

"Here, stop er minute. Bob's *my* boy."

"Yes, but you are not in school with him."

"Well, thar may be somethin' in that. I'm mighty glad the stills 's goin'. I never did drink, an' I don't want my chillen ter."

The sentiment of almost all the community was opposed to the stills, and after hearing the expressions of the people I went home better satisfied with them and more hopeful of their future than I had ever been. The majority of the boys seemed glad, too.

"It will not be so easy for us to fall into temptation now," was the common expression of gratitude.

Callaway and a few others, I understood, were of a different opinion.

Callaway continued to worry Bill about Mol, and Bill worried me. I was almost disgusted with his vacillating opinions. I wanted to tell him what I had been told about Callaway's motives. But, no; the watchman was right; let him be tested.

"Bill," I said, when he was again talking to me about doubting Mol, "did you ever notice the effect of one thing upon many different things—how the influence differs if effected at all?"

"Often," he said.

"Then listen: The rain falls in beating fury, the fowls hasten to their roosts, horses and cattle go in their stalls, children run in from play, men and women hasten to the houses; in the mountains the wild beast creeps to his lair; but what are the things that remain outside to be pelted by the rain? The hard rock cliffs stand firm, until slowly century after century they yield, and disintegrate little by little, so that the earth may be enriched; the rivers spread over their banks, until these are worn away, and the sediment that has come down from the mountain is spread over the valley; the waters turn a thousand wheels; the springs fill, the

wells rise, the meadow-grass grows green, the trees spread themselves, unfold their leaves, and in the end the creatures that have gone in are blessed by the things that remained out."

"But those that went in were not wrong. They would not have been benefited by remainin' out."

"That is just what I wanted you to observe—not so much the blessing that accrued to either, but the effect of the rain upon each. It is the nature of animals to flee from it, though it comes to them indirectly as one of their greatest blessings. It is the nature of rivers and rocks and meadows and trees to remain in it, though the benefit is for others. The rain effects everything according to its nature; so does every other influence. So, in the end, it is more the nature than the influence. The influence only lays bare the nature. Again, did you ever notice how one thing is affected differently at different times by the same influence?"

"Yes."

"In winter the trees and the meadows do not yield to happy influences from the rain. The dried grass becomes not green, the bare limbs do not put forth as in the spring or summer. It would seem that the rain had lost its power. But no; the nature of the tree and the meadow is not the same in different seasons. But the rocks and the rivers have not changed. They are emblems of strength."

"I think I know what you mean—whether upon different objects, or the same objects at different times, circumstances, or the things that stand around them, only show their nature, and—you's talkin' 'bout me," he continued, more excited, and going back to the cracker dialect. "Callaway's talk 'bout Mol' jes' brings out my nature. Another man might act different from me, an' not pay no 'tention to it—jes' love Mol more; an' thin you want ter tell me I change like the tree that's bare an' brown in winter. I wouldn't have b'lieved Callaway once, though I did make Mol miser'ble

on 'count of him; an' now I'm too ready to b'lieve enny-thing he says. I reckon you're right, Mr. Ramla," he continued, rising; "I don't love Mol as I used ter."

"Ah, I thought it. Then you should try by every means possible to tell her so, so that she may be free to care for some one else."

"I cannot, when I don't know where she is."

"Then let Callaway tell her. He probably knows. But so far as her caring for him is concerned, I put no credence in it at all now," I said.

"No," said he, "she shall never with my consent learn of my change of feeling from him. I have too much sentiment for what has been for that. Then I'm not ready to tell her yet; I'm not sure of myself. I don't know whether I still love her or not."

"Then it is time you were becoming sure of yourself," I said firmly. "What has caused you to change, Bill?"

"I hardly know, except this: I am getting an education, and it has given me a taste for higher things. I have aspirations and hopes that, try as I may, I cannot weave Mol into. She is ignorant, and could not appreciate my feeling, could not aid me in my efforts for a better life. And more, I am not altogether selfish; she could not enjoy the life I hope to live; she would be miserable."

"And *you* would, too, you think. I am glad you did not say it. Your feeling is unworthy of you. If that is your nature, I am disappointed in you," I said. "Would you forget your mother, dear to your heart since childhood?"

"Never!" he replied.

"Ah! Bill, your present feelings will lead to it. True and faithful as your mother this girl has been since you were children. I would not throw a damper on your ambitions, but there are ties that ambition should not break; ties that if one is faithful to will not interfere with a right ambition. In some mysterious

way, it may be, they shall be shown compatible, and shall go hand in hand. I would not advise any man to fall in love with a woman who is not his equal in intellect, aspiration, or character; but when a tie has bound for years two souls in bonds of love, and one rises above the other in any of these things, one should be true to the tie, and the result will somehow work out for his highest gratification—at least, for his highest peace.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

When I next saw my friend I said to him: "I am disappointed in Bill. I can appreciate your feeling when his little brother died; there is a sense of loss." Then I told him of Bill's changed feelings towards Mol.

"Do you know that would be exceedingly gratifying instead of disappointing to some men? They would consider it the highest sign of improvement in Bill, and encourage him to cultivate the feeling. There is a great deal to be said in defense of their position, too. What is the little quiver of one heart, that will soon beat itself out, compared to the work of a life? I have often wondered if it would not be better to advise some of these people to break away from their surroundings, leave their homes, and leap into another existence. It is so hard to cling with one hand to the old life, and with the other to take hold of the new. Except for the mothers I would often advise this. Bill would certainly be kept down by Mol. I will tell you what I did last year. A widow came to me and said, 'I am very anxious to go to school; my health is not good and I cannot stand working in the field. Then I am ambitious; I look beyond the common, sordid life that I have always lived, and want to make something of myself. My husband and two children are dead; I am entirely without means, and must either support myself by labor or be dependent on my father. I am at his home now; he does not want me to work for myself, because my labor is valuable to him at home; he keeps my younger sister there instead of sending her to school, because it is cheaper to have her than to hire a hand. He wants me to stay for the same reason, and not only refuses to pay

my tuition if I come to school, but calls me an ingrate, because I want an education; he thinks I ought to help him because I now have to live at his house, and he will always keep me bound down in this way if I will allow him. What would you do?' I said, 'I would come to school. Your father and mother are growing old, and they will need your help more in a few years than they need it now. You would afford them and yourself a bare support by working the farm. Educate yourself and prepare to support your parents and yourself well. Your father has no right to keep down your ambition. Make a useful woman of yourself, and merit the final plaudits of the good. When you engage in rough farm work you blunt and rust the blade of intellect. Reason with your father, tell him it is for him and your mother that you take the step you do, as well as for yourself and the world; and in time, if not now, he will see that you are right. Help him all you can when you are not in school, and in every way show a willingness to do right.' I have advised several not to stay at home after leaving school, but to go into the world and make something of themselves. What is the use of being educated, and then going back to the same old life? They will soon rust out and be what all the generations of the past have been. You have to deal heroically with some cases. If you let Bill marry Mol and settle down, he will always be the same Bill Collins, when he really wants to make something of himself."

"The cases you speak of are different from his," I said. "His is purely a matter of constancy to the highest thing in the world—pure love. I know not how, but I believe that if Bill is true to Mol, everything will yet be right, and he can make of himself all he is capable of."

"You are wrong," said my friend. "At the beginning I thought as you do about Bill, but I have argued myself into a different belief now. I hope he will never marry Mol."

"A short argument will sometimes lead men into a belief that their mature reason opposes," I replied.

"It is only a matter of sentiment with you," he said.

"It is firm principle," I hotly retorted, and left him.

Bill came to see me that night.

"I felt condemned after what you said to me, Mr. Ramla, and since then I have thought much over my lost love for Mol. I believe I'm right in not caring for her longer. When a girl does as she's done for the last three years, I do not know that any man need feel bound to her."

"If Mol had given no promise for the future, you might be justified in feeling that way; but seeing that she has given you evidence of her intention to be faithful, I think you would be wrong to be faithless," I said.

"Perhaps I am wrong, but at any rate I don't love her any longer. Love is not governed by reason. You can't stay in love with a woman just because you think you ought to. The heart is not bought and sold like merchandise; neither is it controlled by obligation."

"Oh! it is not necessary to enter into an exposition of love. I see it is no use to talk to you longer," I said. "But your action is strange, Bill—very strange. I am disappointed in you, I am sorry to say."

"I am very sorry, Mr. Ramla. I had rather fail to meet the wishes of any other human being, but this is a matter I cannot change. Some day you will know me better and judge me more fairly than you do now. I am going to see Mol's mother. I haven't failed to go a day since she left, but I mean I shall go next to speak to her of Mol and my changed feelings. She talks to me every day about her, and takes it for granted that I still care for her, and it grates upon me terribly. I feel like a hypocrite every time I see her."

The next day Bill went. I saw him going and

walked slowly behind a few minutes after. I thought I would go in and try to console the old lady after Bill left. I went on the mountain and sat where I could see the door. I waited a long, long time. Poor Bill! I would not have had his task for a great deal.

Mrs. Smith had grown morbid; she thought and spoke of no one but Mol, and did not seem to care to talk to anyone but Bill and myself. That was what tried Bill so; he could not bear to talk of Mol now. I had noticed in my last few conversations with him that it had seemed to irritate him for me to speak of her. It was a guilty conscience that caused him to feel so, I was sure.

At last I saw him come out, and I went into the house. Mrs. Smith had fallen, and was lying face downward on the floor. She had fainted. I lifted her and placed her on the bed, and then bathed her face. I was afraid to leave her to go for anyone else. She came to in a few moments, and looked up at me as wildly as if she were not in her right mind.

"What is it, Mr. Ramla? What's the matter? Oh! yes, I know. Bill Collins has been here, an' he didn't have no good news. Did you find me on the floor? Yes, I 'spect you did. I don't r'member much arter he left. My brain kinder whirled 'round, an' that is all I know. It's all over with him, Bill says. Did he tell you? He can't love Mol no more 'caze she went 'way an' left us; an' he don't know whether she thinks 'bout him still. He b'lieves in Mol, though, he says, an' he knows she'll come back ter take keer o' me. He said he'd still come an' help me ever' day like he's been doin' all along, but I don't want him ter; couldn't bear ter see him now never no more. An' I was so proud o' him, too; prouder'n his own mam. He's been gittin so smart. Do you know, I b'lieve that's what's the matter with Bill; he thinks my Mol won't be smart 'nough fur him. Of course he didn't say so; he laid it all on her goin' off, an' he didn't think she loves him yit. That didn't satisfy me, 'caze ef I kin think Mol'll be constant ter me, Bill ought ter

think she'd be constant ter him. I dunno what I'll do; didn't have nobody but Bill ter comfort me while Mol's gone, 'cept you sometimes, Mr. Ramla, but you ain't been like Bill; he sorter 'peared ter b'long ter me."

She spoke in this strain a long time, and then began talking incoherently. I felt anxious, and went for Mrs. Collins to come and stay with her while I should go to Walesca for a physician.

When the physician saw Mrs. Smith he said she was in a very precarious condition. She was old, the shock had been severe, and her nerves could not stand much now. The only thing that would really do her much good would be for her daughter to come.

Katherine went to stay with her and nurse her. Bill seemed greatly distressed. His mother condemned him severely—the first time I ever heard her do so.

Somehow Mol heard of her mother's illness, and came three days after she was taken sick. She seemed to have toned down very much. Evidently she had been associated with refined people. Her speech was a good deal improved too, and her dress greatly so. She was terribly shocked at her mother's condition.

"She doesn't look like mam," she said to me, "and all on account of that Bill Collins. He's caused me nothin' but trouble for years and years. Why couldn't he 'a' kept his feelings to himself, I'd like to know, or waited until I come, an' then told me. There warn't no use in makin' mam miserable, let alone makin' her sick. It's a shame. He's showed me what he is. He ain't worth my love to be as inconstant as he's been, an' then to come here and put mam in this fix."

"Of course," I said, "Bill did not intend to do any harm."

"He ought to have known mam better, an' I b'lieve he did."

"Don't be unreasonable, Miss Mollie. Bill is not a mean boy, and such a motive could come only from a vile heart."

"Then, maybe I'm wrong in judging him, but it was a curious way to do."

"I tried to explain Bill's feeling to her as I understood it, but she would not understand. Bill sent to know if she would see him. She refused for a long time but I told her it was only just to him that she should."

"He ain't been just to me," she answered, "but you can let him come."

Bill told me afterwards that it was the most trying conversation he ever held with anyone, unless it was when he had spoken to her mother.

"I told her I'd be faithful still if she'd let me, but she wouldn't hear to it; and I reckon it's well enough, because I don't think Mol's the girl for me any longer."

Mrs. Smith recovered slowly, and Mol nursed her faithfully; she seemed to be trying to make up for her absence, and as she aptly said to me, "for bein' her daughter."

"All this has come through me, but I couldn't help it. The best folks in the land advised me to do it, and I know it has been for the best."

I thought I would ask some time where she had been and why her actions had been so mysterious, but I had no opportunity of seeing her away from her mother. Bill told me that he had insisted upon knowing, but she refused to say.

When Mrs. Smith was well I went to see them one day. Mol had left. She had employed a young girl, a cousin of hers, Rebecca Jane Smith, to stay with her mother, and had gone away as before.

"She wouldn't let me stay here by myself no more," the old woman said, "but she know'd it wus bes' fur her ter go ag'in, an' she wouldn't tell me why no more'n she would before. She sed she'd allus hear ef thar wus anything the matter jes' like she did this time. I'm better satisfied now I know Mol kin hear, an' I'm better satisfied 'caze Mol's been home wunst more."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The man who had owned the stills left a written statement. When a man had opened a still that was not on his land, he had located it and quietly notified the revenue officers; he had been "riding through the country and had seen signs of it." In that way he kept the revenue officers thinking that he was interested in destroying the stills, and made his own more profitable. The moonshiners had soon learned that it was a protection to have stills on his land, so when we investigated the matter to execute his will, we found that every blind still in that section was on his land. The owners of these stills had been captured often, it is true, but not nearly so often as when they had opposed the power of this cool, calculating "Moonshiners' Boss," as they called him. They were summoned together, and the will was read to them in court. This exposed them to arrest and fine, but the dead owner had bequeathed to each a sum sufficient to pay this last fine. They accepted the gifts of their lands very graciously, and pledged themselves to observe the conditions of the will.

We asked the revenue officers to continue their official vigilance, and they did so for some time, but found no evidence of a violation on the part of the moonshiners. I, too, watched them, making many a night's trip to their former dens of evil. There was no sign of distilling, and no sound save that of the mournful owl or the deceptive opossum in the night watches around the former distillers' homes.

The groceries were broken up, too, but breaking them up was as difficult work as closing the stills. The grocery men would buy from the government still, but

later the law that neither a distillery nor a saloon should be located within three miles of a schoolhouse or a church was passed, and we were greatly protected. There were churches on every side of the school several miles distant, and the groceries, being compelled to move three miles from these churches, were a good many miles from us, so that the saloons soon became a thing of the past as far as their influence upon us was concerned.

Mr. Jones, the man who ran the grocery already mentioned, and I had become good friends in spite of my opposing his traffic, and not long before the law just spoken of was passed, I went to his home.

"You 'member the first time you come ter see me up at the shop, Mr. Ramla?"

"Yes, I shall never forget that, Mr. Jones."

"Well, you wus the greenest man I ever seed; don't b'lieve you ever wus in er grocery before."

"Not like yours, Mr. Jones."

"Bill wouldn't tell me yer name; he wus right; tain't safe fur er man ter be know'd by er grocery man in these diggins 'till he's been here er while an' proved hisself. It never made much diff'ence ter me, though; I thought you couldn't do much harm; you wus 's in-nercent 's er goose wadin' 'round in the pond whin I goes down ter water the barrels. He makes er awful fuss 'round me 'caze I interfere with his puddlin', but he can't do nothin'; he dunno how. I thought you didn't have sense 'nough ter harm me."

"Wait and see, Mr. Jones. I may show a little more brains in time."

"Not ef you's like the thing I's likened you ter. I never know'd er goose that could be taught. You musn't think hard o' me, Mr. Ramla; I don't mean no harm by calkin' that way. You've got sense 'nough ter do folks er power o' good, but you ain't got 'nough ter do 'm no harm; I mean, you ain't er sharper like me. You can't git ahead o' me."

After the law was passed, and he had to close or move his saloon, I went to see him.

"Well, you ain't so smart 's you may think. You didn't make the law, but mebbe you axed 'm ter make it. Ef you did, it's the fust time I ever wus outdone by er goose."

He could not dispose of his home and land, and so remained, and became a quiet, prosperous farmer, while his saloon stands untenanted, bringing to mind the corrupt business that has now gone to ruin.

One afternoon I went on the mountain to the lonely grave, and waited for the old man. I loved to go there still and talk with him. It was a change from the life that elsewhere swept its ceaseless tide about me. The stooped form came after a while, ascending slowly and with effort. Ah! it will not be long, I thought, before he will come for the last time, and they will be reunited where the hills are not hard to climb and the step is never infirm.

"Mr. Ramla," he said, after we had been talking some time, "I felt kinder doubtful o' the moonshiners 'bout here whin they said they wouldn't go in the still buziness no more. I thought they'd play off on you, an' I b'lieve they doin' it."

"Do you think any of them have opened the stills again?" I asked.

"Yes, I think some o' 'm is open. I walks 'round here some at nights; I don't sleep so pow'ful good, an' it seems kinder restful ter go up whar the air 's purest. I walked 'round the other night, an' come purty nigh er still, an' it 'peared ter me 'twas runnin'. I 'spect you'd better see 'bout it."

I went that night and came back fully satisfied that two or three stills were running. It was too bad after our efforts. The next night I got McCabe to go with me. The battle must be fought again.

"We'll be bold 'bout breakin' it up this time," McCabe said.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Break in on 'm. They know me; the las't one o' 'm 's 'fraid o' me yet."

He unbuttoned his coat and showed me his belt of pistols.

"I kin show 'm these, an' thar ain't er man that 'll fire on me."

"But your fighting days are over," I said.

"I wouldn't make er bizness o' fightin' now, but it's er good thing ter know how ter use er pistol, an' let folks know it. You take two o' these," he said, "an' we'll go in here."

"I don't know that I'm willing," I replied.

"Thar ain't no danger with me," he said. "I'll go in front."

He knocked. No one responded. He knocked again. The lights went out. As quick as a flash, McCabe was at one small window.

"Stop," he cried, "and open that door. I know what you're up ter."

"Is it you, Mac?"

"Yes, it's me, an' I want ter git in. You might as well lemme, 'caze you can't git out."

The man opened the door, and we entered.

"What does you mean by openin' this still ag'in whin you pledged yer honor not ter do it?" McCabe asked.

The man laughed: "How many times have you broke your honor?"

"I've never broke er promise," McCabe said, "an' you know it. I wus always too bold ter make promises, but ef I did I kep' 'm."

"How you know I'm runnin' this still ag'in? I didn't say it."

"I know it, 'caze I've run wun myself, an' knows the ins. The signs's clear 'nough. Now, you'll not only have ter give up this bizness, but you'll have ter give up yer home. That's er purty way ter treat yer family ar-

ter they had er home the rest o' thur lives 'thout wuk o' your'n. They never use-ter be sure o' wun. It's er shame fur you ter cause 'm ter have ter give this up 'caze you can't keep yer honor."

"I ain't er goin' ter cause 'm ter give it up nuther; don't bother 'bout that."

"But you'll have ter since you opened the still."

McCabe stalked into the next room, where I heard him rolling barrels. The moonshiner followed him and tried to stop him.

"Stand back," McCabe said, "stand back."

The man pulled out a pistol, but before he could raise it, McCabe caught his wrist and disarmed him.

"I hate ter put er man whar he can't defend himself, but I can't keep stoppin' ter fool with you ter-night."

He rolled barrels down the slope towards the small stream, and emptied them in the stream. Then he turned to the moonshiner.

"Ef we leave you now you'll skip 'fore mornin', an' you'd jes' as well come 'long with us. I ain't no officer, but I'll be responsible fur takin' you."

I went by his house and told his wife where her husband was. Three times that night we went through the same scenes, and took three moonshiners to Walesca. We telegraphed to Atlanta, and the men were taken down and fined.

While they were gone, the wives of all three men came to us to plead for their homes. They had no means of support, and nowhere to go if they should forfeit them. We waited until the men returned, and this time they gave their oaths not to run blind stills any more. Then they were allowed to go back to their homes.

This was the only serious trouble we ever had with the moonshiners after they gave their first pledge.

McCabe has never given us cause to doubt his Christian character. It is a pleasure to visit his home and see his efforts to lead a different life. His wife

looks less careworn; the distrustful expression has left her eyes. His children look bright and happy, though one son has been a trial to him, because he has his father's tendencies, and McCabe thinks some day he may lead the same desperate life. But I tell him that the boy has seen two phases of his father's life, and cannot fail to choose for his emulation the latter, since in it the boy himself has been happier and better off.

Bill's junior year commencement had come, and he acquitted himself well in his first original address. His ambition aspired to the highest attainments, but his successes were marred now and then by a touch of the old crackerish boastfulness. It had almost died, but like his cracker speech, came back in excitement, or when he was flattered too much.

"They say I made a fine speech, Mr. Ramla."

"I am glad they think so," I said; and he looked at me in astonishment. He had expected me to endorse what "they" said. "You did make a creditable address, Bill, but people should not spoil you by telling you so too often."

He never spoke of Mol now, and when I mentioned her name once, he asked me not to speak of her again.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The life at Walesca was greatly changed—no blind stills, no groceries, no counterfeit money!

Others than myself had noticed the change. Walking along one day I passed a party of crackers of the old régime, grouped by the roadside, discussing the situation.

"Did you ever see such er change?" I heard one question. "'Tain't no longer who's goin' ter be 'lected an' who ain't; no politics in the matter now; it's all school. I never heard so much talk 'bout wun place. I thought at fust 'twas all talk an' wouldn't 'mount ter nothin', but it's 'mounting ter heap sight more'n I want it ter."

"Why, you would not have the condition changed to what it once was, would you?" I asked coming up to where they were sitting, three on a log.

"Certain I would; er man's got no rights now 't all, an' he useter have all he wanted."

"Why, of what rights have you been deprived?" I asked.

"All I ever had. Take 'm down ef you want ter while I 'member 'm. Well, thin, fust, the right ter drink. It useter be that er man could go ter er still an' git er barrel o' liquor ef he wanted ter—not plum' up ter the stills—the moonshiner wouldn't let you git too close on ter it fur fear you'd tell, but 'round 'bout in the neighborhood. 'Twas er mighty good time; an' ef you didn't want ter git direct from the still, you could jes' step down ter the turn o' the road an' buy from er grocer, an' he was as jolly as er coon. 'Twas er mighty good time. Now, stills er all gone, 'cept government

wuns, an' they can't be nigh the school. The school's in the way o' ever'thing? Nothin' now ter put er good taste in yer mouth, noth'n ter make you feel good; you never forgit yer enemies; it's er powerful tryin' time ter er man's speerits. Well, thin, second: it useter be that a man could chaw's much t'bacco as he felt like, an' nothin' warn't said 'bout it; he could chaw an' chaw an' chaw till his jaws would work whin thar warn't no t'bacco in 'm." He illustrated the process of chewing here by working his jaws in a twisted up and down motion that was apt. "You set 'round the fire in winter an' thought 'bout the time 'fore you wus married whin you wus bashful-like, an' the gal wus kinder so, too, an' she'd set on one side o' the chimney, an' you on the tother, an' you'd chaw an' she'd dip, an' mebbe not say nothin' fur er hour. An' sometimes you'd set 'round the fire an' tell yarns an' make the old 'oman an' chilluns laff; an' ever' las' child 'cept the gals'd be tryin' ter chaw 'fore they wus three foot high, an' some o' 'm'd fall off the shuck-pile sick. 'Twas er mighty good time—gone now. Thar ain't no peace in chawin' at my house now less'n whin the chillun's at school. They come in an' say, 'Dad, don't chaw; 'Fessor says 'tain't elegant; he won't let us do it, an' 'tain't right fur you ter.' An' they won't listen ter my tales. I love ter tell tales settin' 'round the fire like we useter 'fore they got ter studyin'; it's powerful tryin' ter er man's speerits. Well, thin, third: it useter be that er man could have what he wanted in his own house, jes' comfortable furniture, an' now the gals's got more funny notions stuck 'round, 'caze it's nice an' r'fined.' I jes' stan' off an' laff at the things sometimes whin I don't throw 'm in the fire. An' they's got cushions in the cheers, what make you feel like you sittin' on air, an' mought fall enny time. An' thin thar was wunst whin er man could have things ter eat jes' like he wanted, cabbage an' all thim good things fur supper; but now the chilluns say 'tain't healthy; phisiology—what's it?—says 'tain't healthy;

it makes folks' brain so it won't work. An' I jes' ax 'm how much longer they been livin' than me, an' how much more thur brains is wuked. An' then it useter wus that er man could wear what he wanted ter, but now it's put on your best all the time. Mighty good time the old time wus; powerful tryin' on the speerit now. Well, thin, third, it wus so wunst that er man could boss his own family like he pleased, an' set back an' rest an' take his ease, leanin' back in his chair an' smokin', or doin' whatever suited his fancy, an' send the old 'oman out in the field ter plow the steer, an' the chillun round ter tend ter things—'warn't worth while ter git out o' yer cheer ter have ever'thing goin' as smooth as glass. 'Twas er mighty good time; clear gone now. All the right er man's got these days is ter wuk and edicate his chilluns. I can't say whether my chilluns mus' wuk; you folks done 'cided 'thout askin' me whether I like it er no that they mus' go ter school. It's er sin fur er man ter keep his chillun, what wus give him ter do what he wants with, out'n school. An' I can't make the old 'oman wuk like she useter, because it's heathen-like fur wimmin folks ter wuk, like the Lord didn't make man fur ter boss. This is er powerful tryin' time on er man's speerits. It 'prises me like ter think that mebbe arter er while they'll change the water an' air."

"That 'bout takes in ever'thing, Uncle Jake," another said. "The Good Book sed er lot o' trouble 'd come 'fore the end o' the world. Reckin it's no more'n we could look fur. It's hard sure fur er man ter be 'pressed like er man warn't free; but reckon we can't change the matter now. These folks wus cunnin'; they got thur way 'fore we know'd it, but it's too late ter git it back on 'm now."

Did you ever pass a pond and hear the croaking of the frogs? They croak whether the pond is high or low, but I believe they croak loudest when the pond is high. Frogs are not the only creatures with such habits.

It was best not to pay any attention to these men, but to carry on the work regardless of them. Their day will pass. Another generation will feel different.

Not long after this I spent an evening with my friend. After our usual talk about school matters, we had become silent, and I sat meditating for some time.

"Of what are you thinking so earnestly?" my friend asked. "I have watched you for the past half hour closely, and not a muscle has moved, except the muscles of the face, and those have betrayed anxious thought. I feel better over the condition of the people, and so ought you. But you are a miserable man, always thinking of some evil, and never satisfied with the good. Be grateful once."

"I am always grateful, but I am never satisfied. I pity the soul that is satisfied; it will never progress. Dissatisfaction makes the difference between man and other animals. You are right; I have been thinking very earnestly of something that I will not say is an evil, but that may become one; such, at least, has been the history of similar lawless organizations. Whether this will be an exception or not, I cannot tell. I speak of the whitecap organization, which, as you know, has of late been growing rapidly in this section of Georgia. The society may be good, and some of the best men in the land are said to belong to it, but already many of its acts have been evil, and they will become still more so if, as I said, the organization follows the rule of things that digress from law."

"Possibly the matter ought to be given more thought," said my friend, "but it is hardly wise for *us* to trouble about it. The whitecaps have never interfered with the school, and probably never will. There are so many things that do directly affect it that we should give all our thought to them."

"I am not sure that this matter will never affect the school, or that we should not consider it now. The man who watched me for so long was, I feel sure, a white-

cap, unless, indeed, he was employed by the man who died and left the moonshiners their homes."

"Have you seen your 'apparition' since the death of that man?"

"No, but he may want to leave the impression upon me that the owner of the stills was the man."

"I would not worry about the matter. The man was probably a confederate of the still-owner or a moonshiner acting independently."

"If he was a confederate, why has he not opposed the action we have taken under the still-owner's will?"

"Oh, well, maybe he is a whitecap, and if he is, that can mean no harm to you."

"I do not know what it may mean," I said. "But I do know that the whitecaps are getting too active."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A few days after our talk about the whitecaps my friend told me that Callaway had caused some trouble. There was a boy in school who was not bright, and Callaway had worried him greatly. He told him that whitecaps punished boys who did not make a good stand in their classes, and the boy had been afraid to be out at night. The following day the lad was detained in town on business, and was late getting home. Callaway knew it, and went ahead of him to frighten him. He wore a costume similar to that of the whitecaps, and frightened the boy very much. The next day the other boys told him that Callaway had fooled him. He was very angry and used some strong language to Callaway. Callaway then grew very angry also, and said that the whitecaps really should get after the boy.

I asked my friend what he would do about it. He said if Callaway were not going to graduate that year he would expel him, but that, after his long and patient efforts with him, he disliked to send him into life without a single honor.

He was given military punishment, and allowed to stay and receive his diploma. He had not studied well, but managed to get through.

"Mr. Callaway, what do you expect to do?" I asked, when he was leaving school, after his graduation.

"I expect to study medicine, and when I have completed the course and established a good practice, to marry and live a quiet, useful life."

"I hope you may," I said.

"Yes, but you do not believe I will, Mr. Ramla. You have never had any confidence in me."

"I have always had the confidence that you merited. A man himself is responsible for the confidence people have in him," I replied; but I felt a little guilty.

He went to a medical college in Atlanta and did as he had done at Walesca, dragged along with but little effort to attain real success. I was in Atlanta once when he was there, and met the proctor of the medical college.

"Look here," he said to me, "you have sent us a worthless student from Walesca. He does not do your college justice if it really has the merit I have always heard awarded it. Callaway is not only not a good student, but a disreputable character."

"What has he been doing?" I asked.

"Oh! drinking and giving general trouble. He has no honor."

He soon left Atlanta without graduating, having become so dissipated in the city, where he was exposed to constant temptation, that he would not attend his lectures. He began clerking in a store in Rome, Georgia, and for a while did well, and made friends.

One Sunday my friend was in Rome, when he met Callaway, who had been drinking. My friend begged him to go to his boarding-house and stay until he was himself. But he seemed reckless and would not go. That afternoon a young boy, the son of the gentleman my friend was visiting, said: "I never saw anybody so reckless as that young fellow, Callaway, who has been clerking here for a month. He swears he's going to kill somebody to-day; I heard him say so, and he is carrying a pistol."

Later in the afternoon he came in, very excited and pale, and said: "Callaway's done what he threatened. I was down the street a while ago, and he went up to the livery stable for a horse and buggy. The owner, knowing he had been drinking, refused to let him have the turnout. Callaway then went to the stable, and, fearing trouble, I followed. When the man refused him again,

he became livid with fury, and made terrible threats. Finally, the proprietor of the livery stable went into his office, and Callaway got the horse and buggy himself, and was sitting in it ready to drive, when a clerk came in. 'You cannot have that turnout, Mr. Callaway.' 'So your proprietor said, but I've got it.' 'But you cannot keep it, Mr. Callaway,' he said taking the horse's rein. 'I will show you about that,' Callaway replied, and tried to drive off. The clerk held tightly to the rein, and the horse reared under the restraint and the fierce lashing that Callaway was giving him. 'Let go that bridle,' Callaway said, 'I'll show you who is the better man,' and he struck the clerk with the whip. The clerk made an effort to catch the whip with his left hand, holding the horse with the right. Callaway stood in the buggy, the horse rearing as it was, took deliberate aim and shot the clerk twice, saying, 'I will teach you not to fool with me; I'm a desperate man.' The clerk staggered, then fell in front of the horse. Callaway cut the frightened animal a fearful blow, and drove over the dying body of the brave young clerk. I screamed for help and tried to catch the horse's rein, but Callaway aimed at me with the pistol, and said, 'It's no more to kill two men than one,' and I dropped my hand, too frightened to attempt further to stop him. He drove madly into the street, and I went to the dying man. 'He has killed me,' he said; 'bring him to justice, that he may not kill another man.' He died with these words upon his lips."

"Of course the officers have gone to arrest Callaway?" my friend said.

"Yes, sir," the young man replied, "but there are men collecting now who will be as likely to find him as the officers, and they will not deal so mercifully with him."

Terrible thought! For four years my friend had labored to make a man of this boy, and this was the end. He went to the men who were banding themselves for a

lawless mob, and begged that they leave Callaway to the law. It was useless to ask it; they were infuriated, and not without reason. All night the two parties searched for him, but he was not found. The governor offered a hundred dollars reward for his capture. It was weeks before he was found. At last in an old barn the sheriff found him a hundred miles from the scene of the murder, and for protection he was taken to Atlanta.

My friend went to see him. He seemed callous. Always before, no matter what the offence, he had shown some feeling. Now he seemed perfectly unconcerned, not caring for what happened nor for what should come. I pitied his sister, Maggie, and wrote to her. Her reply was pitiful indeed. It was so distressful and disconnected that I feared for the young girl's reason. She begged me to do all in my power to save her brother from the worst fate.

Katherine was much exercised for her friend. She asked to go and stay with her during the trying time, and I consented. Bill was distressed: "Callaway was my enemy from the very first, but I cannot help feeling for him now."

When Bill had declared that he did not love Mol any longer I had thought that he cared for Callaway's sister. If this were so he should now manifest it. He did not do so, however, and was almost angry with me for allowing Katherine to go and stay with her.

"It will be so trying for Miss Katherine," he said.

I was surprised, and told him what I thought.

"I care for Miss Maggie Callaway! I could not think of such a thing, on account of her brother. She is a fine girl, and I have always admired her but I do not care for her in the least."

Before Callaway's trial began, I met one of the still-keepers that had kept his pledge.

"See here, mister, is Callaway killed a man sure 'nough?"

"Yes," I said, "he really has."

“Well, ’tain’t no ’sprise ter me; It’s jes’ what I ’spected ter come ter pass, only I thought mebbe how it’d be Callaway that ’d be kilt instid o’ his killin’ some other man. He allurs wus er coward, but he slung er pistol round powerful whin he wus drunk, an’ I reckon that’s the way ’t wus. I never could see how you an’ ’Fessor could be fooled so in that chap; he wus the meanes’ feller that ever come along the school, an’ yit it seemed as ef ’Fessor thought the sun riz an’ set in that boy, the things he done fur him. You dunno ’bout that feller an’ Lewis, what wus another bad wun; they use ter come ter the still at night, an’ they’d drink ’til they’d ’gin ter feel queer, an’ thin they’d say better stop, they reckon as how you’d find it out on ’m ef they didn’t; an’ they’d have their bottles filled ter take ter the boys an’ ter las’ ’m the next day. They wus terrible chaps, they wus.”

CHAPTER XL.

The trial came. Callaway was taken to Rome. Public sentiment was still so bitter against him that he had to be kept under close guard for his protection. The jail might have been left open, and he would not have thought of escape; he wanted the protection of the law.

The trial was short. There was abundant testimony against Callaway, and scarcely any in his favor. He testified in his own behalf, going through with the whole of the circumstances of the killing in a tragic manner, and closed by saying:

"He insulted me, and I shot him; yes, shot him down—a thing any man will do when he's insulted."

A shudder ran through the court room when he uttered the words, and sat down with a deadly pallor on his cheeks and a forced smile on his lips.

His family awaited the verdict in mental agony of suspense. I would not allow Katherine to attend the trial, but I sat by Maggie to comfort her as I might.

The jury was not long out. They came filing in in solemn procession, and when the foreman was asked for the verdict it was "Guilty of murder in the first degree, with a recommendation to mercy because of the prisoner's youth."

It was milder than any one expected, but of course the family had hoped. Maggie, unnerved by all that had passed, uttered a piercing shriek. Gray-haired men wept. I do not think there was a dry eye in the court room except the prisoner's. He looked like marble, immobile and unfeeling. He received his sentence in the same manner, apparently not even hearing what the

judge said when he sentenced him to penal service for life.

Poor Maggie! She could scarcely walk from the court room, and when we had gone with her and her mother to the house where they were staying, she threw her arms about Katherine, and with another piercing scream, fainted. Katherine was never stronger. She tried to comfort as she could, her troubled friend, but Maggie was never herself again. Proud, ambitious, sensitive, this blow was too great for her strength. After a long spell of brain fever, she passed from life and its woes. Poor life! So marred, so burdened, by the sins of others! But the world's troubles will never cast gloom over it more.

Mrs. Callaway expected to take leave of her son before he should be taken to another sphere of existence, but the people were so incensed that the sentence had not been death, that it was not safe for Callaway to be kept a moment over the necessary time. They hurried him off on the next train; and his mother did not even know when he left. In fifteen minutes after the sentence the prisoner was on his way to the penitentiary. They sent him to the lumber yards. He had never been a strong boy, and they gave him the light work of marking lumber.

I visited him soon after he was taken to the lumber yards and asked permission to talk to him, in the presence of a guard, of course.

"My dear young friend—" I said; but he stopped me before I could say more.

"If you had only called me that and shown some confidence in me before!"

"Stop, Callaway," I in turn interrupted. "I may not have called you 'dear young friend,' nor shown very much confidence in you, but there were others who did. My friend, the president of your college, showed all the confidence in you that one man can expect from another, and gave you more affection than most boys receive

at home. I may have been derelict in duty towards you, but he was not."

"That is true, but I wanted you to care for me, too. Many a time I wished for your confidence and love; I was jealous of Bill and others, but at the same time I knew that the fault was mine; I never felt more forcibly any saying than yours, that a man inspires the confidence he receives and gets all he merits. But this I will tell you: you did more than your duty by me. If I had but listened to the teachings of the Professor and yourself I should now be free and happy. But I am bound forever—a young man without a hope, without a friend, without a home, without a name, and no effort, no labor, can bring them to me again. Oh! oh! oh! my brain will soon give way, and I shall be a life without a mind!"

"You need your reason more than ever now," I said; "do not break down; do not let it slip from you;" and I tried to explain my meaning to him; but it was almost useless then.

"Callaway," I said, "it is too late for reproaches now; but if you will do your best in the future, you may yet find peace."

"I loved the man I killed," he went on, "though I had known him but a short while, and if I had been myself, bad as my real self is, I would not have committed the deed; but I was maddened with liquor. And, do you know, I drank so constantly for years that now my system demands alcohol, until I am sometimes almost wild without it. You did not know it, Mr. Ramla, but I drank all the time I was at Walesca."

"No, I did not know it then, but I learned it before your trial;" and I told him what the moonshiner had said.

"Yes, and he might have told you more. After the distilleries were closed, I still got whiskey. The moonshiners would always have a little, though they were afraid to have much. The last time that I went to the

stills, though, they told me they were really going to give up the business altogether. It cannot matter much now, Mr. Ramla, what confessions I make. The worst cannot bring me lower than I am. I peddled whiskey all the time among the boys while I was at school. I gambled, too. Two or three times I won all a young man had, and he was obliged to stop school on account of it. Sometimes I would feel sorry for him, and lend him a small amount to start with, and try to win his money back. It was shameful; I regret nothing more in all the black past than depriving two or three young men of a year's advantages in school."

"Another thing I will tell you: I was dishonest in other ways than gambling. Do you remember having charge of the school while Professor was ill at your home? It was at the beginning of the term, and I would not enter for some time after I heard you were acting as president. I feared you would deal more harshly with me than the president. I did not know where Professor was, but I knew he was sick somewhere, and Lewis and I were hard up for money, and we went to the town in which you live to attempt what I had never attempted before—burglary. We got into one house and took from a man's pocket a hundred and fifty dollars, besides other things. Your house was the next we entered, and the room in which Professor lay ill was the first we came to. We did not know it was your house, or we should not have entered it. We used gas upon the sleeper. I leaned over the bed and recognized the features. The awfulness of what we were doing almost overpowered me, and I told Lewis so, but he was always more hard-hearted than I, and he laughed at me and seemed disgusted. When Professor was under the influence of the gas I felt very anxious; I knew he must be very weak, and was fearful he would not recover from the effects of it. I never loved him so much, it seemed to me, and never felt so like a criminal. If he had died, I think I would have given myself up to

justice. Lewis did most of the stealing that night, though I fumbled about the room and pretended. The only thing I got was your watch, and I took that only because I knew Lewis was a desperate fellow, and if he suspected me of not trying to rob he might fear that I would betray him and take my life. When we were ready to go he said 'Come,' but I stayed behind a moment to see if Professor was breathing. I felt so remorseful as I looked at him, and thought of all he had done for me and my evil deed to him, that I determined I would never again lead an evil life. But I soon changed my determination and continued to live in the same old way.

"Next day Lewis asked me what I had taken from your house, and I told him your watch. 'Let's sell it; we can't keep it and I don't want it anyway.' 'Lewis,' I said, 'I want it, and if you will take my share of the money we got last night and leave me the watch, I'll say quits.' He did so, and I expected to give you the watch back some time, but I never could find the courage; and once, when Lewis and I were playing cards, and I had lost all my money, I bet the watch and he won it. 'Now, look here, Lewis,' I said, 'that watch must be an old family piece of Mr. Ramla's, and he must have it some day; I would not sell it for anything.' He said, 'I would, if I could get enough for it.' 'No, you will not,' I said; 'there are the authorities, and I tell you not to sell that watch until I have a chance to win it back.' He promised that he would not, but before I could get a chance you found the watch in Lewis' trunk. I was to win it with some of the money he stole from the boy Simpson. Yes, I was in that affair, too, and Lewis certainly did a noble thing then. He took all the blame and let me go. Lewis broke the window and got in and I watched outside. Lewis was to go to New York the next morning and I was to let him have my share of the money for the watch. You remember the morning Lewis was expelled? I shall never forget it.

You looked at me and I grew pale as death. I felt as if you could read my heart. No wonder that I am here. My life was bad enough even if that last great crime had not been committed. One evil went on at Walesca, though, that I was not connected with, and that was the circulation of counterfeit money. I was afraid to handle it. Lewis said I was a coward, and I was; but I wish I had been more cowardly about crime."

The guard announced then that I could not speak to No. — any longer that day, but that I could do so on the morrow.

Callaway bade me good-bye and said: "There are some other things I want to confess to you."

I went the next day and Callaway continued his story.

"You thought I knew the stranger who watched you so long; I did not know him. I only knew he was watching you."

"Yes, I overheard you say so once when Bill and I were on the mountain," I said.

"Oh, yes, I remember the time. I was going to tell you that Lewis and I were the men who hunted you down and shot at you, and when the trial came and there was not sufficient evidence against me, I felt almost like confessing my guilt; but the feeling of triumph over you was too great. I hated you because you interfered between Mol and me. My course in regard to her was one of the strangest things in my life. When I went to the cracker party at Bill's house I had no thought except to amuse myself by guying the crackers. I had never seen Mol Smith before, and knew nothing of her relation to Bill, but I soon found from his actions she was his sweetheart, and it then became my pleasure to do all in my power to win her from him. Mollie was not an attractive girl to me, and it was a great bore to be with her; but I was determined not to allow a cracker boy to hold any girl when I chose to win her from him. I have always been jealous and

spiteful, and though I never loved Mol, I was jealous of her and spiteful toward Bill. But I do not think she ever cared in the least for me. All that I told you about hearing from her was untrue. I never heard a word from her. I saw her once when she was home during her mother's illness, but she would tell me no more than she had already told you. I do not know to this day where she is. As long as Bill cared for her I wanted you all to believe that she would marry me, and when he declared that his love for her had died out, I cared nothing further about the matter; but I was obliged to keep up the impression that I wanted to marry Mollie Smith to prevent your discovering my motives. The letter I showed you I wrote myself. Miss Mollie was a good girl. I tried twice in every way possible to get her to run off with me. The second time she left home, and I flattered myself it was because she was afraid I might persuade her to marry me some day, and was fearful to trust herself with me, but I don't think so now. I am sure she has never ceased to care for Bill. Tell Bill what I have told you, and if Miss Mollie ever goes home again tell her. I would like Bill to come to see me at some time if he will. He would be kind to do so, for I have treated him shamefully."

I tried to talk to Callaway about his final fate, but he would not listen.

"At some other time come, and I will talk to you about that;" and I left him.

CHAPTER XLI.

The year that Callaway committed his awful crime, Bill graduated. It was a momentous period of his life. There are two days that a man never forgets—his graduation day and his wedding day. On his graduation day a man is proud of himself; on his wedding day he is proud of his bride.

Bill was not a first-honor boy. He would have been, but that his health gave way from hard study coupled with hard work at home, and he was obliged to lose much time from school. It was a great disappointment to him, but it was just as well as it was. So many first-honor men are lauded to the skies, and start in life feeling that their success everywhere must be as great as it was at school, and taking it as a matter of course, fail. It is well for people to be disappointed sometimes. Bill made an excellent address. His subject was, "The People," and the peroration was as follows:

"You have heard of the leaders of men. What of those who follow? I have read of sixteen great battles that have decided the fate of nations, of sixteen great generals who planned them, to whom all the honor of victory was ascribed, and to whom the world bows in homage. The battalions that went down into the fight were composed of the common people. Kingdoms and republics have risen in power, and have established themselves on the earth, and the annals of history have been searched for the register of the people who established them; but it is not to be found. But there is a republic of 'the common people,' whose power is felt more than that of all other republics and all empires, whose strength is greater than that of the United States,

and of Britain and of Germany combined. When it was founded, the leaders of men refused to hold citizenship, and even tried to overthrow it. They refused to recognize its founder, but the common people heard him gladly. And at the last, when this great commonwealth shall have become too holy for life among the nations of the earth, it shall have everlasting life as the final Republic of God."

I looked around while Bill was speaking, and Mol was there listening, more eagerly than anyone else. Her eyes were bright and sparkling with admiration. She leaned forward with nervous movement, and I felt sure she must care for Bill still.

As soon as the exercises were over I went down to speak to Mol, but she had gone.

When Bill sat down, the people applauded tremendously. But the strain of labor, under the disadvantage of physical weakness, had been too great, and he looked pale and unnerved. I thought he would be ill, but he soon recovered.

Bill had been under such a strain for a long time that I thought he needed change and entire rest, and I took him home with me to spend a month. Katherine brought little Kitty McCabe home, and the child seemed to enjoy the trip thoroughly. She was such a bright, attractive child that she interested the entire town. One of my friends wanted to adopt her, although he knew the history of her father. I wrote to her father and mother and told them of the desire, but they refused to give up Kitty.

One afternoon when Katherine had a party of friends, a young man who had just entered society in our town, and whom we did not know well, was present, and Kitty came into the room. He asked who she was, and said to a gentleman near him, "I'm going to have some fun out of that child. Say, little one, are you any kin to that man who was condemned to be hung a year or two ago?" Kitty was very sensitive, and understood

him in an instant. She straightened up and said, "Sir, he is my father," and ran out of the room crying.

Bill, although he was now polished in manner, and had so often manifested strong self-control, now showed the lack of it, so common to people in the lower walks of life, and rose in anger, took the young man by the coat collar and led him out of the room. When they reached the gallery, Bill struck him an awful blow, and said:

"I'll teach you to hurt a little child's feelings," and left him.

I felt outraged with both Bill and the young man. I had followed them out, and when Bill turned toward me after what he had done, he said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I couldn't stand that."

"Neither could I," I said, "but there was a quiet way of punishing it."

Bill seemed much mortified, and went to his room for the remainder of the evening. Of course the entire company felt embarrassed, and soon dispersed.

The next morning the young man, whom I found afterward to be an objectionable character in many ways, and debarred from coming to my house, sent a challenge for a duel with Bill. I answered the challenge, stating that Mr. Collins was a Christian gentleman and did not fight duels. The young man then declared that he would be revenged in some way, but he made no attempt to molest Bill.

I thought the matter had died out, until one day there was a picnic in the country about five miles, and all the young people from town went. The day was happily spent, and it was almost time to return, when it was proposed that the party should take another ride in the boats. They were on a mill-pond that was deep in places. Bill had taken Kitty, and they went some distance up the lake. Bill got out of the boat to get some grapes for her, and she held close to the bank by the weeds while he was gathering them. I was near in a

boat with Katherine, when I saw the young man with whom Bill had had the trouble row up to the boat in which Kitty was. Bill came with his arms full of grapes, talking gaily to Kitty; but just as he was going to step into the boat his enemy pushed it away with his oar, and Bill fell into the deep water. Kitty screamed, and a dozen boats went to them, and Bill was soon hauled into one of them. The young man who perpetrated the dastardly trick jumped out of his boat and got to town as soon as possible.

With the exception of these two occurrences, Kitty and Bill enjoyed being with us, and the change seemed to do them both good. Katherine and Bill were both fond of reading, and they read and studied together a great deal of the time. One afternoon I found them in our flower-garden, sitting under the crape myrtle tree, reading and talking as congenially as if they were in every way equal.

I took Bill to my cabinet one day.

"Come," I said; "I have a rare curiosity to show you. Of all my collection I value this most."

It was a small flower, pasted on a satin card.

"Do you remember when I first met you, Bill, on a day in June five years ago? You were sitting on a log resting from your splinter-gathering. You took me to your home, and on the way we stopped to admire the flowers that made the mountain beautiful. I remarked on the azalias, and you, plucking this, said, 'You like them big honeysuckles; I think this is er purty thing.'"

Turning the card, I showed him the quotation, and said:

"Since that day the arbutus blossom has been an emblem of hope to me, and many a time when the work at Walesca has been burdensome, and cares and doubts have come to me, I have taken it out and turned to these words, and felt hope renewed and energies quickened."

"I remember the meeting well," he said. "I shall

never forget it; and now that you speak of it, I remember the occurrence with the flower, though I had forgotten it before. It has, indeed, been a prophecy of better things, and hereafter I, too, shall regard the arbutus blossom as an emblem of hope. How the condition of this section has changed since this little flower bloomed! Mr. Ramla, I hope my life is worthier than it was then. My hopes are higher anyway, and it is time I were thinking of what I shall do in life."

"I want to talk with you about it, but not just yet. You have not fully recovered your strength, and during your stay with us I want you to think of nothing that will interfere with your pleasure."

I put the arbutus blossom carefully back in its place, and Bill and I went out into the garden where other plants bloomed. Is it not strange that this lovely flower, with all the care that can be given to it, will not live out of its native heath? I have tried to cultivate it, but with no success. It seems to belong to lowly life, and to be an emblem of hope for the people among whom it blooms. It is theirs, and chooses to shed its influence about them alone.

Bill and Kitty remained with us a week after this, and went home looking better and happier than when they came.

The mail that day brought me a note from my friend, asking me to come to Walesca and aid him; there was important work on hand. So I went the next day to help in it, whatever it might be.

CHAPTER XLII.

I found my friend in much perplexity. Counterfeit money was being circulated again. When Lewis had been there, it had been specie; now it was notes. My friend showed me a communication that he had received:

"You have done a wonderful work, but one who would really bless this world must never fold his hands. Your work is not finished. There has lately risen another evil for you to suppress. A counterfeiter is at work somewhere in your section, and you had better make an effort to find him before your school opens."

No name was signed to the letter.

I was discouraged to think of having to brave dangers and difficulties again. I had thought all this trouble was over. However, I went out among the people to see if I could find any clue to the criminals. They knew nothing, they said, except that counterfeit money was circulated.

Nicely, the gold-washer, said: "I don't git dollars easy these days, an' whin I do git 'm I like fur 'm ter be worth somethin'. I had er dollar here the other day; I dunno whar it come from. It had been put away er long time, mebbe two months, an' I took it over ter town fur ter git t'bacco an' meat, an' fetched 'm home, an' the very nex' day here come the store-keeper ridin' up an' sayin' I'd gin him money what warn't good, an' he wanted his stuff back or er 'nother dollar. I had done used the stuff, an' don't you b'lieve, that man made me pay him er 'nother dollar. I'm allus losin' money; ain't made that fifty dollars back yit. It's turrible times on honess' folks."

This seemed to be the sentiment of the entire community, but they had taken no steps to suppress the evil. It might have gone on forever, and they would never have taken steps to suppress it. The crackers are the most helpless, listless people in the world.

As an illustration of this, there was no sexton at the church, and the people had to attend to the lamps, etc. I have gone to church at night between the first and second bells, and there would be a hum of voices, but no lights. When I lighted the lamps there would be twenty or thirty men to be seen. They had been there fifteen or twenty minutes, and abused everybody connected with the school because there was no light, but never thought it their duty to strike a match. Whatever was done was done by the school.

"What did they do before the school was here?" I asked my friend.

"The preacher lighted the lamps and swept the church. He also furnished the oil and the broom."

"Let's try them one night," I said, when I was to lecture in the church.

We went, but there was no light, and I began lecturing in the dark. After I had spoken probably fifteen minutes, some man rose and said:

"Here, stop thar er minute; I say, don't you think we'd better have er light? I can't see you, an' I hears mostly with my eyes. Thar's fellers chawin' t'bacco 'round me, too, an' I's got on my bes' Sunday-go-ter-meetin' clothes."

"I think it would be better to have a light," I said. "Please strike a match;" and the man sat down.

The crackers laughed, but not one of them made an effort to light the lamps, and my friend had to light them.

And so counterfeit money might have been circulated forever, an though the old crackers would have complained, they never would have attempted to stop the evil. The cracker boys who had been to school, though,

were becoming active citizens. Two of these, and Bill, determined with me to try to discover some signs of the counterfeiter; or, rather, to find out whether such a man was operating in that section, before we wrote for a detective.

We went out one night to where the stills used to be. One of the moonshiners had moved from his home and left it vacant. The house and still were both going to decay. We went there.

"There is a light in the still," one of the boys said.

We went nearer. Two of us went on one side of the house, and two on the other. Through the window we could see an old man, stooped and gray, stamping paper. He would hold one up to the light, then lay it down carefully on a pile of similar ones. We watched him for some time.

"He will no doubt be here to-morrow night," I said. "We had better get McCabe to come with us then and take him."

"Let's take him now, Mr. Ramla," said Bill. "He's an old man, and it would be no trouble at all."

"He is probably disguised," I said, "and not an old man at all, but a young man armed and desperate."

"Well, we are armed, too," another of the boys replied, "and we had better make sure of him now we've got him."

"Very well," I replied. "We shall have to break this window. Of course his doors are fastened."

We crashed the window with one blow. The light went out immediately, as we expected, but instead of pistol shots, we heard only a groan, and the old man shuffling about the room. When all had gotten through the window, we struck a match. The man was nowhere to be seen. We tried the doors; they were still bolted on the inside, and the window we had not broken was fastened on the inside, too. The counterfeit money was lying all around, blown by a gust from the window. We thought of a trap door, but there was none. We were

about to leave when we heard a voice on the roof. I opened the door and ran out with the light in my hand. The boys all followed. We looked on the roof, and the old man was wildly throwing up his hands. He muttered something we could not understand, and jumped, though we called to him not to. The distance was not great, but he was lamed by the fall, and his head was hurt. We picked him up, and took him in the house, though he madly resisted. The light fell upon his face now, and I recognized him.

It was the old miser.

"Is it really you, Mr. Denton?" I asked. "I did not recognize you; I am sorry we disturbed you."

"I can't live in no peace," he said, and he groaned with pain. "They won't let me be. They got all my money wunst, and now they come ter rob me when I try ter git more. Oh! it's gone, it's gone, it's gone," he cried in agonized tones. "It's all gone; oh, me!"

One of the boys went for a doctor, and another for one of the former moonshiners' wives. We made him as comfortable as we could until they came. He kept on mumbling, and now and then would grow wild and make frantic gestures. Then in weakness he would lie quiet for a while. At last he seemed to sleep, but in an instant, with a sudden jump, he sprang from the bed and began picking up the notes on the floor. One leg was broken and he could not walk, but he dragged himself about the room, and seemed to forget his pain. We tried to stop him, but it infuriated him so that we thought it better to let him alone.

I told the boys to pick up his money for him, but when they tried to do so he screamed and threw anything in his reach at them. He dragged himself about the room, searching in every nook and corner for his treasure until he had found it all; and then, clutching it tightly with a grim smile of contentment, crawled back to the bed. We lifted him in, and he fainted from weakness.

The doctor came. "He can live but a few hours," he said, and we sent for his family.

Clutching his counterfeit notes tightly, he died as he had lived—a miser.

His family said that they supposed, from letters they had found, that he had been induced to take his money to Atlanta, and that spiritual mediums had got hold of it. He returned and seemed better satisfied than he had been for years. He always lived in a little cabin at Walesca, to himself, though, and they had known very little about him.

The counterfeit money that had been circulated had first made its appearance about three months before. Everyone supposed that the old man, robbed of the money he had hoarded, had become weak in his mind; but still his old passion controlled, and he sought to recover his lost treasure by counterfeiting.

I did not like to think that the death of the old man had been caused by our coming; but the doctor relieved me much when he said:

"He could not possibly have lived a month longer; his brain and heart were both affected; the fall is not what killed him; he had congestion of the brain, and he would have died very soon anyway."

CHAPTER XLIII.

A few days after the old miser's death Bill and I went to see Callaway. He had been in prison only a little more than a year, but he looked twenty years older, worn, and his brow furrowed.

"Bill," said he, "I wronged you terribly, but I am sorry for it, and if I could live my life over I would atone for the evil I did you."

"It has passed, Callaway, and though I hated you once for it, I have no unkind feeling now. I could not have and be a human being."

"That is true. Who would hate a fallen enemy?" Callaway said. "I want to show you a letter from some one; I think it must be from Miss Mollie."

Bill read the letter and handed it to me.

"DEAR MR. CALLAWAY:

"I hope this little note will not serve to intensify your grief at the terrible trouble that has shadowed your life. It is sent as a message of sympathy. I have thought of you many times since the awful event which has brought so much woe to you and yours, and have hoped from the first that some day, in some way, good may grow out of this evil. I beg you not to allow your fate to harden you because you feel that there is now no hope of a better life. Your ability for being and doing good is not taken away by your present condition. Even the walls of a prison cell cannot confine a life that would exercise its influence for good. The soul cannot be bound except by fetters of sin; I hope for you greater freedom than you have ever had. Oh! the inestimable good that you may do to the souls about you if you will but free yourself and bend all your energies toward freeing them! Some day, I trust, pardon will reach you, but I urge you not to think of earthly pardon now. Think rather of the pardon that earth cannot grant, and accept that. It will sweeten your life and enable you to consider your surroundings only for good, and to be and to do, where you now are, all that you could be and do anywhere. Be sure that the world needs brave and noble men in the penitentiary as surely as it needs them everywhere else. Stand among

your fellows as a type of manhood amidst misery. One more thing: After you have repented of your crime, and feel that God has forgiven you, do not allow a sense of guilt to oppress you. Grieve not always on account of the sin for which Christ died once. It would be but a waste of strength, and you need that strength and the world needs it. I shall think of and pray for you. May the love of heaven ever shadow you, and may He who is able to give you all peace, all strength, all joy, ever keep you near himself. I would like to hear from you sometimes, but for reasons that do not pertain to you at all, it is best for me not to make myself known to you. Think of me, however, as A FRIEND."

"That is a beautiful letter," Bill said to me. "If it is from Mol I wonder who wrote it for her. The thoughts are worthy of a great mind. It must have helped you," he said to Callaway.

"More than anything that has come to my life in its present state. What she says is true: Men are needed in the penitentiary, and I will be a man here. This is my answer to the letter:

"DEAR MISS MOLLIE:—Though you have reserved your name, you have not reserved your identity from me. I know that no other friend could have sent me such a message. You have heard of sunbeams finding their way into prison cells. One has penetrated mine and tinted its gloom. Not a word of condemnation, not a word of just blame. I thank you for this. My conscience condemns me; the world condemns me; and I have felt so oppressed that it is a relief to find a friend who can forget my guilt, and think for a moment of my misery. If the one was great, the other is commensurate with it. But I will try to be strong and bear the merits of my sins. I thank you for your counsel, and will follow it. I have never been a man, but I will be from this time forth. You are right; even if one has fallen so far short of the standard of manhood as to reach a condition like mine, he should not feel that he is beyond reformation, or that his life would be of no service to the world should he reform. A man can be a man even in a penitentiary, and men are needed here. It is awful to be with my companions in guilt, and unless I can reform them, I cannot bear their companionship. I remember the days at Walesca as the happiest of my life. Many a time when I talked with the president of the college, or Mr. Ramla, or with you, did I feel an inspiration to higher living. Why did I not change my course then? Those days have passed, but it is well that the memory of them remains. If I ever become what you urge me to become, it will be due to the influences of that time. Think of me as kindly as you can, and write to me. My recollection of you will always be as of a benediction. May our Father bless you as you develop into the highest, purest womanhood.

"Gratefully yours,

"ROBERT CALLAWAY."

When we left Callaway I said :

"Bill, if you cared for Mollie as you used to, that letter would certainly arouse your interest."

"It has aroused it very much," he replied. "I do not care for her now, but I am still interested in her, and I should like to know who is the author of the letter. It shows that Mol is under the influence of a strong character and a noble mind."

"Bill, I would not intrude upon your feelings, but if an old friend may ask the question, whom do you care for now? I never see you paying attention to any girl, but you have at times spoken as if you cared for some one."

"Mr. Ramla, there are few things that I would keep from you, but this I must. My love must be my own secret until I am in a position to declare it to the young lady herself."

I begged his pardon and said no more.

I have been to see Callaway often since, and am sure he is keeping his word. Some day he may be pardoned; but should he never be I do not think his nature will suffer injury, since he seems in every way a changed man.

CHAPTER XLIV.

My friend and I again talked over the condition of affairs. It had certainly improved. There was no evil element in the school or its surroundings now, unless the whitecaps should cause trouble. The discipline was excellent. Every student moved to the tap of the electric bell. The teaching was good and the school, as an entirety, was all that any people could wish. The condition of the crackers in that section was better than that of many other classes in other sections.

I determined to go home and to come back to Walesca only when my friend needed me. My own business required some personal attention for awhile, and I told my friend that I would leave him.

Before I left Walesca Bill came to consult me about his plans for life. It was in August, and the weather was very warm.

"Let's wait until night, Bill, and go up on Pine Log to talk the matter over."

"All right," he said; and he returned home.

That night I was detained at Walesca until very late, but having given my promise to Bill I went anyway. Riding along rapidly, my horse shied and nearly threw me. Something must have frightened him, and I looked to see what it was, but could discover nothing. The whitecaps had of late been doing some desperate work, and it was hardly safe for even an honest man to be out at night. Two nights before they had punished a man who was probably innocent.

It was eleven o'clock when I reached Mrs. Collins' house. The family had all retired except Bill. He was still waiting for me.

"What made you so late?" he asked, and I told him.

"Shall we go up on the mountain now?" I asked. "The air is cool and it will be delightful, but it may not be safe. I just passed something that frightened my horse; maybe the whitecaps are out."

"They will hardly come to the top of Pine Log to look for any one, and I am so anxious to talk to you about my plans that if you are willing we will go."

When we reached the top, I said:

"Bill, in five years there have been many changes. I have been glad of most of them, but sometimes I like to think of the past and look for an assurance that it really was. Look to the heavens and behold the type of constancy. 'As fixed and constant as the northern star,' is no meaningless phrase. If Cæsar's word was indeed of that character, and he was as wise as he was constant, Mark Anthony was right to weep over his body. The arbutus blooms here, and fades; the birds sing their melodies, and are gone; the trees throw off their summer robes, the snows come and melt upon Pine Log; but above it the stars remain. The milky way divides the heavens, and its light is so soft and pale that you think surely it will flicker out while you look up; but the light of your eyes shall fade first. The light of millions of eyes have faded, and who knows but that the milky way sheds its light in the long journey of the soul when it receives its new sight through the valley and over the river? See, Polaris guards the north, and wise Major, in dazzling brilliance, is near by; Capella, girt with splendor, is yonder, and Jupiter and Mars stand in twin glory, reminding us that we, too, are one of the starry hosts and literally dwell in the skies; and, because we are one of them, they plead with us to be worthy of our position. It seems to me sometimes, when the stars twinkle so, that their hearts are heavy because of our failures, and that their eyelids blink with the weight of tears."

I said this for Bill's sake. It is necessary to think externally as well as internally when plans, especially plans of life, are made. We went along till we reached the white cliffs, and then sat down to talk.

"Have you decided what you will do?" I asked.

"No; I have thought of many things, but decided upon nothing."

"Do you want to enter a profession?"

"I do not know. It is my taste to do so, but I scarcely know whether it is my desire or not. There are so many in the professions now, that it is a question whether it is best to enter any of them. Some have to fail."

"You need not," I said; "'it is impossible but that offense cometh; but woe unto him by whom.' Whether there be few or many, failure is always positive guilt. The man who fails is alone responsible for it."

"But where there are so many the competition is great, and the support of the profession, whatever it be, is divided."

"You are not involved in that. 'There's always room at the top,' as Webster said. Up there competition and division of support are but little felt; there alone is real excellence. Which of the professions do you like best?"

"I have thought of law; they say I have talent for speaking. But the bar is very corrupt."

"That does not necessitate your becoming so."

"I have thought of preaching, but I am not good enough to preach."

"That is the poorest excuse any human being ever gave for not doing anything. What do you think of authorship? If you are a good speaker, you might become a good writer."

"The literary market is flooded now, and there is no sale for any but the lightest or the most sensational matter. I would not be an author."

"You are mistaken. There are writers who will not stoop to such matter as you speak of, and among them are men and women with names and fortunes. Because such things will be, is no reason why you should engage in them. You do not like the vocations?"

"No; I must say that I cannot think of one that I like."

"Well, taste is not necessarily a consideration. Talent is what you should think of. You have spoken of failure as a probability. That should not be even a possibility if you choose well. You have spoken of corruption. That is always a personal matter alone. You have spoken of profit. That has nothing to do with your choice; it does not belong to any particular business, but may belong to all. You have spoken of the necessity of catering to the public. You have involved necessity with profit. No mean thing is necessary."

"You think then that a young man starting in life need not consider these things?"

"I do; he but wearies his brain, and, shutting out from it higher considerations, starts out in life a failure; no wonder he ends a failure."

"What are these higher considerations?"

"There are two only: First, that I make a success of *myself*, not of my business; and, second, what is my capacity for doing this? Have you thought of what talents you must develop in order to do this? If you have, that is all. The rest will take care of itself. All life, with whatever it offers of influence or power or fame, is free to you. You get what you choose. Make *yourself*, and you may walk up to the whole basketful of the world's goods and take any that you wish, as you may select an apple from a basket or a banana from a bunch. Of course you will select what suits you, and herein is shown the fact that the self controls all."

"I certainly want to be a man. That has been my highest thought all the time."

"I believe that, Bill; but you have thought that

circumstances and condition had something to do with manhood. They positively have no more to do with it than I have to do with the building of a Chinese railroad. The highest advertisement that could be put in a paper is put in every paper that is published, secular or religious: 'Wanted, men and women!' and yet employment-seekers glance over the real want and see that somebody is advertising for a butler or a cook or a typewriter or a school-teacher. The want is for men and women who will fill these positions. There is another form of advertisement in all papers: 'Wanted, by a young man (or woman), a position; willing and able to do anything.' These are usually, though not always, inserted by persons who have failed to become men and women, and are in extreme need, and deceive the public in believing they can do anything. If you have considered that your first need is to become a man, the only thing for you to do next is to consider your talent and develop that. Your talent is the thing upon which God risks your success in this world. And there is no competition in talents. They are individual. Develop your individuality, let it express itself in highest manhood, and you must succeed; all the powers in the world should rise up to aid you. You have begun to make a man of yourself. The work will not be accomplished until life ends. Never waver for one moment; never slacken your energies; never relax. That is all I need to say to you, except this: What your talent is, you must decide for yourself; no one else can decide for you. If you should be in doubt, try one thing, and then another, until you find it. And when you do, never mind if you do not make ten dollars a month in the work by which you develop that talent, continue in it. If it calls you to the blacksmith shop, go there; if it calls you to the pulpit, go there. From what I know of you, through years of close study, I think you should become a minister. Go home and think about it and decide. And when you have decided, I will talk with you, and will help you, if I can, about the means."

My friend had talked to the entire school often as I was then talking to Bill alone. Bill also noticed this, but said:

"It didn't sound so serious to me then as it does now."

"That is because now is the time to decide. Then you felt that you could wait awhile."

We heard a sound like the tramp of soldiers, and we got under the cliff as quietly as possible and waited to see what it meant. Presently a party of about fifty men came along. They were whitecaps, and looked ghastly in the moonlight. I had never seen them before. They passed near enough for us to touch them, but they were marching rapidly, and did not see us. I wondered what their night's work had been.

After they were out of sight, we came from under the cliff. I did not know it was so late. The moon was just setting, the gray dawn appeared in the east, and the wild bird began to whistle its morning song. I asked Bill to wait that I might see the sun rise again from Pine Log. It was as beautiful as after that first night I stayed with Bill.

It was well that I had come to talk with Bill that night, for when I reached Walesca, I found a telegram calling me home.

When I reached home I found my youngest child ill with that fearful scourge, diphtheria. All night long his mother, Katherine, and I watched. The little fellow was strong, and able to run about the room. There was no gradual sinking, no slope before the valley was reached. The terrible germ was simply choking him to death, but he struggled for life bravely. He would run from one to another, clutch his throat, throw his little hands up convulsively, and gasp. Then he would take his bag of oxygen and press it to his lips and breathe more quietly. I took him in my arms fifty times or more that night, and each time he clasped me so lovingly that my brain almost turned.

Holmes was seven years old, my only boy and my hope.

"Oh that I could take your place, my son!" I said.

"No, father, better the branch than the vine."

Wonderful answer for a child! He was not far from the Gates then. He jumped from my lap, ran to his mother, buried his face in her dress, and, before we knew it, had passed through the Gates of the City.

For only two years of his life had I been with him much, and just the week before, my wife had written that she was so glad I was coming home to stay, on Holmes's account especially; he was just at the age at which he should feel the force of each parent's character. I felt that I must have been wrong in staying at Walesca. But who can tell?

Of all sad things that have come to my life, this seems the saddest. It has now been ten years since that awful telegram came. I have received others that have brought news of business loss and sudden trouble, but none like this. Ten years since that fearful night watch; I have passed through many a night's watch since, but none like this. Ten years since Holmes left us; I have said many a good-bye since, but memory still regards this the saddest.

CHAPTER XLV.

When, five years previously, my friend had asked me to come to Walesca and aid him in the work, I had been a man of some means. My assets had been twenty thousand dollars in bank stocks, a comfortable home, with even some of the luxuries of life, and a profitable business. My liabilities had been few. I had begun to think that I might take some ease, and not feel that to-morrow's life depended upon to-day's labors. When my friend's letter came asking me to come and help him in his work, I took it to my wife.

"This is from a young man who is trying to help the world; he is laboring among a class that needs help more than any other in this country; it has been longer neglected than any other; no crusade of Christians or philanthropists has reached it; no writer has spoken of it except in jesting manner or exaggeration, depicting the life of this people in such a way that reformers have thought it folly to attempt to do them good. They are the 'crackers' or 'mountain whites.' The crackers as a class live in the low piney-woods country, and are inferior to the mountain whites, but my friend has found both classes around Walesca, and has established a work there that I believe will be of great benefit to our civilization and culture. I will leave this letter with you to think over, and we will decide to-night what I shall do."

When I came home that evening, she said: "We will talk that matter over now. What would become of your business should you go? Do you think it is in such condition that you can leave it for a time?"

"I think it is. We have enough bank stock to insure us a comfortable living always, and I can attend to

my business well enough by coming home every few weeks, and you can consult with my partner during my absence and decide many things yourself. Besides, if we should lose something, the cause of humanity must be considered, and any good we may accomplish will repay us for all loss."

"If that is the plea, then you must go at once. Your family needs you, but humanity needs you more."

"My family is not lost sight of; I have spoken of us as one, with one thought and one purpose; it is not a choice between my family and humanity, but it is my family laboring for humanity," I said; and my wife agreed with me.

The first year I was at Walesca my business prospered almost as well as if I had been at home. The school was in great need of money when I went to it, and to help the work more I gave of my means as well as my labor, but what I gave in money was only part interest on my bank stock, and I really did not miss it except in a few little sacrifices that amounted to nothing. The second year, by peculiar management of my partner, we lost \$10,000. I do not say that I should have saved it had I been there, but he was kind enough to say so. He begged me to come home then, but I did not feel that I could leave my friend. The third year of my stay we lost more, but I did not feel half so troubled about money losses as I did about the interests of the people with whom I was associated. After the work at Walesca was so firmly established, however, and seemed to need me no longer, I went home determined to recover my losses if possible. I settled with my partner for my absence. He had not spoken of it, but it was only just to him that he should lose nothing by my being away. This left me but a small interest in our business, though I had been the senior partner.

One day, about a month after Holmes's death, the president of the bank in which I had stock said to me: "I am troubled; I fear we shall sustain heavy loss soon, even if we do not have to make an assignment."

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Do you know that I believe our trusted manager, the man who has been with us for years, is an embezzler?"

"Impossible," I said; "he is one of the best men I ever knew."

"Well, the bank inspector will be here in a day or two, and we shall know then; I trust my fears are groundless."

I called at the manager's house that night. "He is yet at the bank," the servant said.

It was after ten o'clock. I had often called at that hour, and had always found him at home.

I went to the bank to see him; he was still at work.

"What is the matter, that you are here at this hour?" I asked. "Stop work for the night and talk with me. You look weary and need rest."

He did, indeed, look weary; I had never seen him look so haggard.

"My brain has been dull to-day," he said, "and I am not yet through;" but he left his work and came and sat near me. He was very nervous, however, and did not sit still ten minutes.

"What is the matter?" I asked, and he looked up startled, as if he had been accused.

"I am not well," he said.

The following day the inspector came. The manager was in his office, and excused himself for a moment. He went out of a side door into the street, and when the inspector sent for him it was found that he had fled, and he has never been found. An old man he was, and left wife and children, who keenly felt the disgrace. He had embezzled a large sum. The bank made an assignment, and I was left almost penniless—all gone but my home and a small interest in a business that was not very profitable now. I was an old man, and had to begin life over again as far as money was concerned.

"We have been called upon to realize that a man may lose all that he has in helping humanity," my wife said.

I was sorry for the loss on her account and Katherine's, but they both bore it bravely, as women can bear such things. I was not the only one who suffered loss. When my friend had gone to Walesca he had been a young man of means. His father had left him a considerable amount, but he spent every cent for the school. Buildings had to be erected, appliances bought, and teachers paid from his private purse. The school was not self-supporting for a long time.

I heard from Bill not long after I left Walesca. He had decided upon his talent. "I will study for the ministry; I believe that any power of tongue or pen that I have I can use best for that." I was glad of this, for I had felt for a long time that Bill should become a minister. I was sorry for my loss of fortune on his account, too. It had been my purpose to aid him financially. The Methodist Church does not require a student for the ministry to enter a theological seminary. It requires him to study a certain course privately, and the annual Conference examines him upon that course. In one respect this is an excellent plan: it saves students much expense. But it deprives him of lectures and other benefits of the regular theological school. Bill wanted these, and I had intended furnishing him the means to procure them. I went to Walesca, however, to see Bill. He was much worried. He wanted to go to Union Theological Seminary, but had not the means. Besides, he did not see how he could leave his mother with all the care of the family. I told him that I would borrow enough for his course, and would aid in the support of his mother and the children the next year, if he would work in the summer and pay it back. He was delighted.

He went to the Union Seminary during the next term, and did well. He came home in June, and I pro-

cured him a lucrative position, by means of which he could return a large part of the sum he had borrowed. He stayed until November, when he attended the Conference and stood his first examination.

The same year my wife said:

"We must send Katherine off for one or two years."

We had spoken of it before, but were waiting until her character should be fully formed. A boarding-school is not always the best place for a girl whose character is not developed.

Ah me! I had thought of Katherine's disappointment; it was the most trying thing involved in my loss, so trying that I could not bear to speak of it to my wife before she mentioned it. I told her it would be impossible to send Katherine now.

"Do you think I have had no foresight?" she said; "I did not know how long we should have money, and I have saved enough for Katherine's education."

O woman, what would the world do without your forethought?

CHAPTER XLVI.

Out of her monthly drawings my wife had saved a considerable amount, and we sent Katherine to Wellesley College. The next summer she came home delighted, having accomplished much.

Bill came back to Georgia also, and I got him a position in the town in which I lived. He stayed with us that summer, and it was a great pleasure to have him. He had become, in his seven years' training, elegant in manners, and he had always had a good heart and delicate sensibilities. He was a remarkable young man. Few, with the opposition of his fellows, would have come out from among them as he had. But for him, the crackers might never have changed their views, and the college might now be untenanted and decayed.

He and Katherine and I went to Walesca for a week that summer. The night after we got there we were invited to a cracker entertainment, about fifty miles away. There was just such a class assembled as I had met at Bill's party seven years before, except that here were people of all ages, from a child five years old to a woman seventy-five.

An old woman said to us:

"We uns hearn tell o' you uns at Warlesky, an' how you done give up the old ways an' is livin' in er new-fangled fashion, what we uns dunno nothin' 'bout; an' we uns thought we'd ax you uns up ter our kind o' party, so you uns wouldn't forgit the ole way. We uns is jes' heard tell o' what you uns is doin' down thar. Er long, tall, smart-lookin' man come through here week 'fore last, an' he tole us 'bout it; must be er cur'osity. We uns would 'a' come down ef we'd er

known 'bout it 'fore. They say it's been a-goin' on six years or more; but that ain't nothin'; we uns don't go ter Warlesky les' somethin' smart's goin' on, an' folks sends us word; we don't hear from thar oft'n. You uns mought er sent us word, I think, but that don't matter now. You jes' come 'long in, an' thin whin you uns go back to Warlesky, you uns give er party o' yer kind, an' we uns 'll come sure. Never knowed whether you got the invite or not; that long, tall, smart-lookin' man said he'd take it. What'd he tell you 'bout we uns?"

We had not seen the man to whom she referred, and the invitation had come through the mail, my friend said, with a request that it be announced at a meeting of the citizens.

"Well, now, that's cur'us. I didn't think 's how that man would er done so, but it's all right. You come here, honey," she said to Katherine and two or three other girls with their chaperons. "Brother Ike, you take keer o' the men folks."

"Brother Ike" took us to one side: "Bein' 's how you come so fur, you mout want ter liken yerselves up er bit," he said; and he furnished us scanty means for toilet-making.

I said aside to my friend: "The school is in the wrong place. These are certainly the worst specimens I have seen."

The children had their games in one corner of the building, the young men in another, the young girls in a third, the old men in a fourth, and the old women in the center.

"We uns 'll jes' talk an' have er quiet time; can't jump 'bout now like the young uns;" and they sat there talking and freely using snuff.

One woman said she wasn't "neither mighty old nor yit mighty young, an' reckon I'll have ter 'vide my time." She went from one group of her own sex to the other, and attracted much attention, as she probably wanted to do. She was very tall, and weighed perhaps

two hundred pounds. She wore a lawn skirt, a little short in front and much too long behind, a long red velvet basque with a ruffle around it, a black leather belt with a tin buckle, a large bouquet of red and yellow flowers pinned on her dress, and a black hat, curiously bent, with a wreath of natural flowers around it, that faded before we had been there long, and dropped off, a flower at a time, as she skipped across from one group to another, until they had all disappeared and left the hat bare. The flowers on her dress were artificial.

One man seemed to be peculiarly eccentric, also. He was old, and was quiet in his manner, but he had a strange habit of touching his right ear when he met certain people. I asked a man who seemed more intelligent than the rest why the old man did this. He said that some years before he had gone to a town some miles off and received a mock degree of masonry, and that this sign had been given to him as the sign of recognition with masons. Since then he had always used it when he saw a man whom he thought might be a mason.

The old man came up to me.

"You be a mason?" he asked.

"I am," I answered; and he touched his ear.

I did not respond, and he said:

"We uns that's masons in these parts allus gives the sign; fine thing 'tis, sure, but that calf butted me down fust pop." They had used a calf instead of the proverbial goat. "I don't think it'd er done it though ef I hadn't 'a' run ag'in it whin I war blindfolded, 'caze calves ain't fightin' animules giner'ly."

The girls played games of one kind, and the boys of another, and the children kept up a merry laughter. A little girl of seven or eight years of age wore, apron fashion, a banner with "The Hope of the Church," embroidered upon it; another, a banner with "Of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven." They were fighting over a stick of candy. I inquired of the man whom I asked about the old mason why the children wore their banners.

He said that some time before, the minister had organized a Sunday school, and some lady friend of his had worked the banners for the children's classes. The Sunday school did not last long, however, and the banners were now worn by the children upon such occasions as this. I asked him if they belonged to the two who now wore them. No, he said, all the children in the neighborhood took it turn about to wear them, and it was now their turn. The mottoes seemed so incongruous upon these ignorant, unenlightened children, that I laughed as I called my friend's attention to them, and he laughed heartily too.

I looked around for Bill to call his attention to the children, but he was nowhere to be seen, so I went outside to look for him, and found him lying on the grass under some trees, near a house in which there was a light.

"Bill," I said, "I was looking for you a few moments ago to show you a ludicrous sight."

"The sights here are not ludicrous to me," he replied. "I left them because they were revolting. This is no way for human beings to live. It disgusts me to see it, but it saddens me when I think of it calmly."

"There is hope for them, Bill," I said.

"Yes; there was hope for me."

Just then a woman came to the door, and I asked her if we might come in.

"You uns ain't tired o' the party this time o' night, is you? We uns ain't had supper yit; we's jes' fixin' it now."

I told her we only wanted to rest a few minutes, and would go back.

"Well, you uns kin come in."

We went in and rested while she bustled around getting supper ready. I noticed on the mantelpiece a curious mass of wheels, and asked her what it was.

"Oh! that's we uns' clock, you know. You see, thar war er man come through here sellin' 'm. They

had wood 'round 'm, an' face an' hands like clocks ginerly have, an' the man made us pay er whole lot o' money, an' said we could pay the res' whin he come ag'in; an' er year arter that he come 'round an' we didn't have no more money fur ter give him fur the clock, an' he sed he wus goin' ter take it thin; an' so I tole the ole man ter take him out'n the field an' show him the craps an' I'd fix the matter, 'caze we warn't a-goin' ter lose what we'd paid; an' while they wus gone I knocked the wheels out. Whin they come back I tole 'm they'd better let me take the clock down, 'caze men wus so keerless like. 'It got broke whin you put it up,' I said ter the man. Me an' the ole man holp him fix it up, an' he went off. 'Bout er month arter that he come back an' wanted his pay ennyhow. I hid the wheels whin I saw him comin', an' he said er lot had treated him so 'bout clocks an' he know'd I wus one, 'caze I wus so keerful like 'bout handlin' the wun what wus here; an' I know'd ef er lot had done fooled him he couldn't fix on no wun, an' I never let on. Yes, it keeps time, but it's er leetle inconvenient, 'caze thar ain't no hands ter p'int it out. We jes' know by the tickin it's keepin' time. What you say, Jimmie? Yes, I'm er comin' with the supper," as some one called, "Mam, ain't you never comin'? We uns is most starved."

Bill looked at me, and when the woman was out of hearing we both laughed heartily. Then we went back to the building where the party was. Three or four tables had been spread, and everyone was making ready to partake of the supper. There was cabbage boiled and served cold; potatoes and one or two other vegetables were served in the same way. The meats were boiled, too, and the pies were stacked and of doubtful character. The cakes were covered with little bits of candy. The whole was not inviting. The woman I had just been talking to brought me some layer cake filled with molasses. I tried to handle it, but could not. The people of the place all enjoyed the supper very much, but our par-

ty, even those who had been crackers, did not seem to relish it particularly.

We pitched our tents that night; there were too many of us to stay with the people. We remained a part of the next day, and my friend and I visited two or three families. A mother was just in the act of punishing a little boy when we stopped at a door, and we hesitated about going in.

"Jes' come right 'long in. He's so bad I have ter whip him ever' day. 'Tain' no oncommon thing; vis'tors don't stop fur that."

My friend thought that a child whipped so often must be hardened, and that the punishment could not be effectual. He asked the mother if she ever punished him in any other way.

"Won't no other way do," she replied.

"Let's see," my friend said; and he asked the child's name. "Johnny, which had you rather for your mother to do, to whip you now or to be mad with you for three weeks?"

"I'd ruther fur her ter be mad with me fur three weeks."

We all laughed, but my friend and I spoke afterwards of how these cracker children are raised, and how differently another child might have felt, though the switches looked formidable. He asked the question, he said, to suggest to the woman that she, more than the child was to blame.

But she was not so impressed at all. She only said: "He'd better say that; he knows I whip hard."

That afternoon we started on our return trip to Walesca.

Bill, Katherine, and I went home when the week had passed. Bill was very attentive to Katherine that summer, but I was glad for him to be with her. I knew that her influence over him was good. Sometimes, though, I would find myself frowning as I watched them together.

It was not strange that Bill liked Katherine. They had been together a great deal, and she had always sympathized with and aided him much. At Christmas the year before, he sent my wife a lovely present, simple and delicate, and wrote her a beautiful letter; he was a thoughtful boy. This year, at Christmastide, he sent a picture of himself. It seemed a little strange. I told Katherine he had better have sent it to me or to the household.

"Why, father, I do not regard it in that way," she said; "Bill and I are nearly the same age. We have been together much, and our interests have been the same. It is very common for young people to exchange pictures."

"Do you expect to send Bill your picture?" I asked.

"I had thought of it," she replied.

How angry I was!

"I object to that," I said; and Katherine did not send the picture.

She had corresponded with Bill for some time. To this I had not objected; I thought it helpful to Bill and not hurtful to Katherine. She often showed me his letters, and I enjoyed them; but now I began to feel that their correspondence was not best. It could not be stopped, though; I could not consent to Katherine's treating Bill unkindly.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The next year Bill graduated from Union Theological Seminary, and was given a good charge for a young man, in the Methodist Church in Georgia. He accomplished a wonderful work for his church that year, made "the waste places blossom as a rose," through his active efforts.

He consulted me about taking his mother to where he preached, so that she might be more comfortable than she could be at Walesca, but I advised him not to do it. The educational advantages at Walesca were better, and I thought she had better keep the children there until educated. He did as much as he could for his mother at home, and paid off all the debts, with great personal sacrifice.

The first year of his ministry, Katherine graduated from Wellesley. She had improved very much in other things than book-lore. Her womanhood had further developed, and she was stronger and more lovely than ever before. Katherine had all her life been loved by young and old, and when I would allow it she had much attention from young men; but she had never seemed to care especially for such attention, and had never shown a preference for any young man except when I thought she cared for my friend at Walesca.

During his summer vacation that year Bill spent two weeks with us. He gave himself up entirely to rest and recreation. Katherine gave up to these, too. After her year's hard work in college she needed ease and pleasure. The two rode together, went boating, and engaged in other enjoyments. I was glad to see them refreshed and brightened by the summer delights, but now and

then, when I saw them together, the old frown would come to my face, and I looked away impatiently.

At last, one night, Bill came to my study and knocked. It was late, and I was about to leave my work for the night. Katherine had left the parlor long before, and I had heard Bill pacing up and down the front gallery.

"Come in," I said; and he quietly opened the door.

"Sit down," I said, "and rest me before I go to my room, so that my dreams may be peaceful instead of the incubus of business worry that oppresses me at night." He looked at me intently. "Yes, I am growing old; the signs of years and troubles both mark my hair and brow. But do not remind me of it; I would have lighter thoughts now."

"Would that you could have them always!" he answered, feelingly.

"No that would not be well. It is better to be oppressed sometimes. But you look burdened, too, to-night. What is the matter?"

"You are right; I am troubled to-night."

"Unburden your heart," I said; "it will do mine good to share your cares."

"You have shared them for years," he answered, "and there is little I would keep from you; but to-night, when I come to speak to you of what fills my mind, I feel a greater hesitancy than I have ever felt before in speaking to anyone."

"Feel no hesitancy, Bill. Know that your interests are always mine, your joys lighten my life, and your troubles are mine."

"Have I spoken of this as trouble?" he asked. "I am not myself. Out of it I hope may come the greatest joy of my life. I have come to you to-night to ask the right to care for your daughter. I do care for her more than everything else in life, and I ask your permission to address her."

I arose impatiently: I was very angry. My first impulse, I regret to say, was to knock him down. The idea of the cracker boy whom I had brought from ignorance, abject poverty, rags, and splinter-gathering to his present state, having labored with him and for him for years, repaying me in this way! And then the thought came: "You have proved his excellence and found him worthy of your daughter!" Worthy? How could he be? I thought of the boy of eight years before, poorer in mind than in material estate—the son of old James Collins. I thought of that old man as my daughter's father-in-law, of the children as her brothers, of the home as her home, of his mother, who could never be anything but Mrs. Collins.

"You do not speak; I am embarrassed," he said.

"You cannot be more embarrassed than I am," I answered.

"Whatever my unworthiness, I am at least entitled to an answer," he said.

"Pardon me, Bill; you are entitled to an answer, and I should have spoken sooner, but I was entitled to think. These things cannot be answered in a moment."

"You are right," he said; "they do require thought; I was too impatient."

"How long have you cared for Katherine?" I asked.

"Since the night I told you that I no longer cared for Mol. I realized then for the first time that I cared a great deal for your daughter, and since that time the feeling has steadily increased, making itself more and more evident to me, until now I am conscious of a lasting devotion. I would not speak of it before because I was not worthy of Miss Katherine; but I have labored hard and long to bring my life to some measure of worthiness, not for her, but to be a man; and yet in all my efforts I have thought of her. I am now able to support her, not as she should be supported, but in some comfort. My debts are all paid, and my mother and

brothers are in a better condition than they have ever been. The children will soon be educated, and can take care of themselves; mother alone will be left me to support. I thought you had learned my feelings before this and had thought over the matter, but since you have not, I will say no more to-night. I beg you to think of me as kindly as you can, and to answer me when you will."

He rose to retire. "Do not go," I said; "we must talk over this matter a little longer just now, and I will answer you later. Have you told Katherine of this?"

"No," he answered; "I would not tell her until I had spoken to you."

Bill was certainly a man of correct feeling. This had always been the old-school way, and we old men are apt to think that better. I thanked him.

"Bill, will you pardon me if I speak very plainly? It is my way of speaking and you will understand it, I think?"

He insisted on my saying just what I felt.

"Then, Bill, I think you have made a great mistake. Allow me to repeat to you what I have often said: you are wrong in not loving Mol."

He flushed crimson. "You have a perfect right to object to my caring for your daughter, but in kindness to me, do not speak again of Mollie Smith. My love for her was a fancy of boyhood, and has passed."

"It was a fancy that lasted twenty years, and though you insist that it was only fancy, I think that you may yet find that it was real."

"Never; and I ask you again, please, not to mention it. I came to you to-night to speak of Miss Katherine. If you will not speak of her, I must go."

He was angry, and I grew angry too.

"Bill, you force me to speak more plainly than I cared to. Do you not see that I have a reason for thinking it best that you should care for Mol? There are indeed two reasons: it is your duty to her after

twenty years of devotion on the part of both, and when you do not know that she does not care for you still; and you are from the same people, the same place, the same life. I would not hurt you, Bill, but do you not think it would be better for you to marry one of your home girls?"

"Do you mock me like this?" he asked. "Have all your efforts for me and my people been a mockery? I believed you when you said you were trying to elevate us and bring us into a new and better life. Now you tell me I must ever be tied to the old one. You have brought me to where I can see and wish for the highest and best life, and say, 'Thus far and no farther.' I am glad that you have, at least, shown me the Christ, who taunts me with no binding link to the past, and promises that heaven shall not be a place of social castes."

"You speak bitterly."

"My speech does not belie my feelings. You must regard me as a man now rather than a minister, if you consider my feelings as a reflection upon my sacred calling. You have touched the quick, and it quivers."

"I am sorry, indeed, to have hurt you, Bill," I said; "I love you next to my own family, and I admire you more than my modesty will permit me to say. I have been too blunt; forgive me; but when you are yourself you will understand me better and know that I did not mean to wound you."

"I believe now that you did not, but this is a matter that cannot be touched without heart-quivers. Regarding this affair as *you* do, I feel that you expect and deserve an apology for my presumption; but feeling as *I* do, I shall not withdraw my request, except to transfer it from you to Miss Katherine. I hope she will feel differently."

"I meant to tell you to do that, Bill. Speak to Katherine. Whatever her feeling is, I shall abide by it. After all, it is a matter that can be between you two only."

He started towards the door, and I caught his arm :
"Bill, if all your people had become what you are, it would be very different with me now. Remember, this is not a personal quarrel."

"It cannot be anything else, since I am more involved in its consequences than anyone else."

"I cannot talk any longer with you now; the conversation would only continue to be a battle; but whatever comes, remember this: I love you and always shall."

I put my arm around his shoulder. He did not respond to the touch or the words. As he went out he said simply, "Good-night."

I heard him go down the front steps and out of the yard. I started to call him back, but nothing that I could have said would have helped the matter that night. It was best for him to be alone with his thoughts, for me to be alone with mine.

It was three o'clock when I heard Bill come in. His coming aroused me, and I heard the clock strike. I had not left the table, but with head bowed upon my hand, had sat through the hours thinking, thinking, until my brain seemed nearing dissolution. When I went to my room, daylight had come.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

I wrote to Bill and asked him to remain with us a week longer, and to withhold his addresses to Katherine for that time, when I thought we should both feel calmer over the matter. He answered very sweetly, and said that he intended to see me again before he addressed Katherine, and had now fully made up his mind not to address her at all without my consent. I talked the matter over with my wife, and she felt as I did. We both loved and admired Bill, but we did not think it best for Katherine to marry him. My wife thought I had been wrong in speaking so plainly to him, and perhaps I had, but plain speech seemed to me necessary. Before the end of the week I went to Walesca to consult my friend. I found him at home and glad to see me, but surprised.

"Well, old fellow, what has brought you?" he asked. "I feared you had deserted the cracker in disgust after the party we attended some time ago."

"Nothing at that party disgusted me half so much as what has happened lately. If anything could cause me to desert the crackers, I think this would."

"Why, what has happened?" he asked. "I was only joking about the party's disgusting you. I thought you were proof against anything of the kind."

"I labored here five years, with many trials and dangers, but was not hurt by the whole experience as I have been by one of a few moments lately." And I told what had happened. "To think that my efforts for the crackers should end in this way! Time, money, strength, all gone on their account, and this is my reward."

"It is a very great reward if you have been able to lift one of those people to a plane with yourself. Bill is certainly a wonderful man. Not only in the Conference of his Church is he so regarded, but some of our ablest preachers refer to him. I understand how you feel about his origin and his connections, but I think you are wrong. You should regard only the man himself."

I looked at him in astonishment. I was shocked at the idea of the matter; but when I saw him I was more shocked at his appearance. He was as pale as death, and his face wore the most peculiar expression I had ever seen on it. I forgot for a moment my trouble.

"You are sick," I said. "Let me do something for you."

"No, it is nothing.—But about Bill, you are wrong. Personal worth is the only consideration of weight. The unpleasant connections need not be thought of seriously. His brothers will all soon be educated, except the married one; he would be the only thorn in the flesh. His mother will not live long. Association with you and your family would soon elevate the entire family very much. Come, do not look so gloomy. Let me tell you the only thing to do. Allow Miss Katherine to decide this. She is the proper one to do it. Do you think she cares for Bill?"

"I am afraid so, and that is why I want to prevent his addressing her. I am afraid she cares for him without knowing it, and that his declaring himself would call attention to her own feelings."

"Well, come what may, it is, in my opinion, best to leave it to them entirely."

I left immediately, and when I said good-bye and thanked him for his counsel, he replied:

"There are other things I should like to speak to you of, but not now. Let me know how this affair ends. Whatever comes, I do not think you need worry. Bill is a very excellent man, and many a father in high position would be glad to have him for a son-in-law."

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"I am not a judge of what would be gratifying to other men," I said; "I only know what would please me, or rather, what would not please me."

When I reached home the week was nearly out, and all of our household looked troubled except Katherine. Bill, I knew, was staying only at my request. He looked ill at ease. I sent for Katherine that night when the rest of the household had retired.

"Katherine, I have something to tell you, and I trust that your feelings about it will dispel my gloomy thoughts."

"What is it, father? I have noticed for several days how depressed and sad you and mother look. Is there other business worry? That will not depress me. I have grown used to it; and, do you know, father, I have thought that it would be best for me to become self-supporting? You are so burdened now."

"It is the fear that I may soon not have to support you that is oppressing me now. Our good friend, Bill, has come to me with a request. He has cared for you for years, he says, and he now asks the right to tell you so. Katherine, let there be no reserve between you and me. Tell me plainly your feelings towards Bill. Do you care for him?"

"I have never had the right to think of caring for him, father. Do you remember a little trouble we had about a matter like this once before?"

"I remember it well. Katherine, you have never had the right to think of Bill before, but now, since he has given you the right, do you care for him? I shall give my consent to his asking you; and I speak to you now that you may have time to think before he comes to you."

She left me with a blush upon her cheeks and a strange light in her eyes. The next night, before tea, I sent for Bill.

"You have my full consent to speak to Katherine now, and, whatever comes, know that my love and my blessing are with you."

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He came back after he had seen Katherine.

"She will not think of an engagement now, though she has consented to my caring for her, and promises to think of responding to my love some day."

I felt somewhat relieved to know that no engagement had been made.

The next night, after Bill had gone home, Katherine stole into my room and said:

"Father, I love him better than life, but I am afraid you and mother will not consent to our marriage. You might consent formally for my sake, but in your hearts you would never feel satisfied to have it so. I know how you feel. I know you do not think Bill worthy of such a marriage; but he is more than worthy; and as far as his people are concerned, that would not trouble me at all."

"I cannot help my feelings, Katherine. This proposal is the most indelicate thing I ever knew Bill to be guilty of. If he loved you he should never have said so; but now that he has, your happiness is the highest consideration, and if you care for him, the only thing to do is to marry him."

Weeks went by. Katherine would not consent to an engagement. It was best to wait, she said. At last she wrote, withdrawing her promise to care for him. I was miserable. I felt sometimes that I should be really glad if Katherine would marry Bill; it would relieve me. And when I saw how pale and unhappy she looked I felt for the second time in my life that I was almost a child murderer. To her letter Bill replied that he, too, thought it was best that they should not care for each other, and while his affection yet remained he would endeavor to repress it, and never speak of it to her again.

He wrote to me also: "It would be painful to go into a detailed explanation of my feelings. I will simply say this: I understand you now, and you are perfectly right. I withdraw all that I said to you, and

instead of the request I made of you once, I now ask that what has passed be forgotten, and that we be the same cordial, sincere friends as of yore. I shall forget my presumption if I can, but the hope that once possessed me has become a part of my life, and whatever comes in the future neither Miss Katherine nor I can help the fact that my nature has been purified because I once thought of loving her."

I did not show Katherine this letter. I thought it would make her more unhappy than she really was. When I told her of the letter a kind of sickening flush came to her cheeks, succeeded by that deathlike pallor that always betrays the heart's feelings; but after a week or two she seemed relieved and regained her wonted serenity of mind.

I wrote to my friend, "Katherine seems bright and cheery again," and he came to see me.

"What happy thought possessed you to come and see a gloomy old man? Our family is just getting over a long depression on account of Katherine and Bill, and I have not fully recovered yet."

"I came to be cheered myself," he said. "I have a request to make of you, and I hope you will not be as unkind to me as you were to Bill. Can I speak to Miss Katherine?"

"Your abruptness completely disconcerts me, else my brain is duller than I thought. What can you mean?"

"I mean what Bill meant, only I am bolder than he; I would tell Miss Katherine of my feeling for her when I am not quite sure that she does not even yet love another man."

"Do you really mean that you care for Katherine?"

"Care for her! You are the blindest mortal I ever saw. I have loved her for years. I could not speak of my affection when she was my pupil. Since then my broken fortune has not allowed me to do it until last year, when the school began to be self-supporting, and I

felt that I could take care of her. I was thinking of mentioning the matter to you when you came to tell me about Bill."

"Do you really mean that you have cared for Katherine so long, and that you had just thought of addressing her yourself when you advised me to let Bill press his suit?"

"I have loved her since before you took her from school years ago. I thought then that you suspected it and feared to trust me not to address her, and I was thoroughly indignant. When you came to speak to me of Bill I could not speak of myself. It almost broke my heart when you wrote to me that Miss Katherine cared for Bill, and when your last letter came, I determined to tell her my feelings at once, with your permission. May I speak with her?"

"With all my heart; and my richest benediction go with you. I will not tell Katherine what she may expect, as I did with Bill, but let you surprise her. I think you will find her in the summer-house. She often sits there after tea. Bring her in, please, the October nights are getting cool."

I heard them go in the parlor, Katherine talking gaily. I went in to tell my wife what had happened and we rejoiced together; my friend was just such a man as I had always wanted Katherine to marry. Not that he was better than Bill, but he was *different*. I loved them both, but I thought of them differently.

My friend and Katherine came to us.

"I have won her," he said.

"Father and mother, I am sure this is better. I never felt that I loved Bill as I love now. I am sure my feeling for him was not real, though I thought then that it was."

"Yes, this is better," I said, "and we are all happier. Even Bill will be glad to know it. My dear fellow," I said to my friend, "I have always felt guilty of a mean thing when I have thought of having objected

to Katherine marrying Bill on account of his connections; it showed a weak point in my character."

"You are unjust to yourself," he said; "it was not so much an actual distaste for the connection as an inexplicable sense of unfitness, which was natural and right."

It was decided that our daughter should marry the next spring. It had been a long while since Holmes's death, but none of us felt like having a gay wedding, so the marriage was quiet. It was in the little home church where Katherine and Holmes had been christened. Bill officiated.

"Strange for a man to officiate at the marriage of his sweetheart!" he laughingly said, "but such is the mockery of life sometimes."

I wondered if he still felt a pang of bitterness; I am sure he felt great tenderness, for after the ceremony was over I saw him brush a stray tear from his cheek.

The bridal party went off for the usual tour, and my wife and I went home with feelings of joy and sorrow commingled.

"We shall live the rest of our lives alone," I said, "but there is love enough yet to fill all vacancies and make life beautiful to its close."

The roses had gone from her cheeks, the freshness from her brow, but in their stead character had drawn its picture in lines more beautiful than the pencilings on an evening sky, and she seemed more lovely to me than in all the years that had gone.

CHAPTER XLIX.

That fall my wife and I went to spend a few weeks with our children at Walesca. Their home was as sweet and beautiful as such lives make homes. The people were rejoiced at the marriage. They came to see my wife and me, and I took her to see many of them. Their life had changed wonderfully. They were becoming a cultured people.

Kittie McCabe and Bobbie Sims were almost grown, and that year would finish school. It seemed very strange to me, but I had not lived at Walesca for five years.

We went to see the berry-picker and his wife, and the old man was more rheumatic than ever. I feared the drawn form would soon break, and asked him of his life and his hopes for the future.

"No use ter talk 'bout that now; it's all settled. Ain't you never heard 'bout it? How slow folks is ter tell things. Yes, I have been er Christian nigh on ter er year now, an' Betsey's wun too. Seems as how we're all happier than we used ter be."

The boy, their heart's joy and pride, was a fine fellow six years old.

"Goin' ter send him ter school nex' year, an' hope he'll do as well as Bobby Sims," Miss Betsey said.

"I am sure he will, Miss Betsey," I replied.

"He'll soon be all I've got. Jane an' Ann's gone long ago, an' the ole man can't be here many more days."

From the berry-picker's we went to see Mol's mother. Mrs. Smith was feeble, and looked much older than when I had seen her last, but she was cheerful and bright.

"Mol'll be home in er year," she said, "an' she's

goin' ter take me ter live with her, wherever she is. She's doin' well 'nough, she says. The onliest thing, I hates leavin' the ole place; 'tain't much—mighty leetle scrap o' er farm, but it's been home er long time, you know; 'pears ter me like it won't be nat'ral nowhar else; but ef Mol kin do better, I'm anything fur her. She's sech er good gal, Mol is; sends me ten dollars ever' month, an' takes keer o' Becky Jane fur stayin' with me. Ain't many gals like Mol."

"Do you know where she is now?" I asked.

"Naw, not yit. Mol says 's how she'll tell me all 'bout it whin she comes, an' I'll be glad she's done like she is."

My wife liked Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Collins, both. "Simple, honest souls," she said; "some day they will attain a higher life."

Mrs. McCabe and my wife became great friends; Mrs. McCabe looked like a different woman now. She was the only one of the crackers who looked younger to me, unless it was her husband. But she was really not a cracker; she came from more cultured people. The new life was like renewed life to her. The baby was now a healthy boy of seven.

"He's in school an' l'arnin' fast," his father said, an' he 'pears so much happier an' more cheerful 'n the other chillun used ter."

One afternoon Katherine and I went to the mountain. We talked there for some time while we sat on the white cliffs, and then went to the lonely grave. The old man came after a while. He was very feeble now. He stopped twice to rest, and when he reached us he was exhausted.

"How are you, Mr. Brown?" I asked.

"I ain't very peart these days; seems like I'm wearin' out; 'twon't be long, I reckon, 'till I'll go too. May's mam'll be more lonesome then; won't be nobody ter look arter her, though Ill leave her plenty ter keep her kinder comfort'ble. Please, Mr. Ramla, ef enny-

thing should happen, an' I should be tuk off suddent, please tell her how I've tried ter keep the bes' keer of her I could, an' I've saved up er leetle money. You'll find it in er ole sock right in the straw o' my bed, an' I hope she'll be contented till May comes fur her."

"Certainly, Mr. Brown; but you are sad this evening. Cheer up and see life in a better light."

"Naw; 'tain't 'caze I'm extra sad; but I feel kinder cur'us. I dunno what's goin' ter happen."

He arose, gathered some flowers, covered the grave, and made it look as I had seen it many times before, like a beautiful bouquet. He stood over the grave looking down for a moment, and then in an ecstasy of joy, threw up his hands and his head.

"The Saviour!" he exclaimed, and fell heavily across the grave.

We felt that his fears were removed, and that he had gone to be with little May.

Katherine went to break the news to May's mother, and I to find help to take him to his home for the last time he should enter it. A coroner's jury was deemed unnecessary, and I was glad of it. All in connection with his death should be as quiet and peaceful as his life had been.

The next afternoon at sunset, when the mild beams of that hour fall softly on all, and on this day shot down into the tomb to lighten it, we laid him to rest beside May. Then there were two graves on the mountain, and both were covered with flowers.

I told the mother what the old man had said, and found for her in the straw of the bed the sock with its treasure. It contained five hundred dollars, which hard labor had earned. He must have sacrificed much to save it.

We all tried to comfort and cheer the mother, but we felt, as she did, that not many years would pass before she would go to meet her children.

"The money's er power too much fur me," she said; "I won't live ter pay it out."

CHAPTER L.

Not long after the old man's death Bill came to Walesca with new plans and hopes for himself and for the world.

The crackers of the section where we had gone to a party some years before heard that he was at Walesca, and invited him to come and assist in conducting a camp-meeting. They also invited my son-in-law; and he, Katherine, Bill and I went.

The crackers had pitched a tent and built an arbor; also some log-huts instead of comfortable cottages, and entertained in them; and it happened that we were invited to stay with the woman who had met us the night of the party.

"So you uns is come ter we uns meetin'? We uns is glad you uns is come; jes' walk in and make yourselves at home. I hope you uns will enjoy the meetin.' "

It was Saturday night, and we retired early that we might be fresh for the Sabbath service. I arose early the next morning, but the cracker girls and boys were up before me, the former preparing breakfast, the latter impatiently waiting to partake of it. There is only one time of the year at which a cracker boy rises early, and that is during camp-meeting.

The boys were lounging around, discussing the hopes of day, but these were not of a religious character. They expected to see their sweethearts and have "er big time," as I heard one express his anticipations. They all wore brogans that had never felt the touch of a blacking-brush, pants three inches too short, coats that came a little below the waist line, and hats too large, having to be put far back on the head to prevent their interfering

with the sight. Every boy had a ten cent Japanese fan, which at that early hour he was using. To each fan was attached at least three yards of red ribbon about an inch wide. When the fan was not in use the ribbon was wound carefully around it to the end, about two yards being left free. The cracker then put it in his coat pocket, leaving the two yards of ribbon streaming. On one lapel of his coat was a bow of red ribbon two inches or more in width, on the other a red rose. Many of these young fellows were schoolboys, and they had probably improved in dress since their contact with the teachers, and yet their attire seemed to me as fantastic as when I first saw them on the night of their party.

Love feast was held at nine o'clock, and a large number assembled in the tent to attend it. Men who had not spoken to each other for years were present, but I noticed that they did not speak when the meeting was over; it had not been a feast of love for them, though they had testified that it was. Women, whose main employment out of the cotton patch or corn field was gossip, were there, but they did not leave the tent before the gossiping began again. It had not been a love feast for them either, though they believed at the time that it was.

At the beginning of the service the minister had prayed that the Lord would come down "*precisely* at nine o'clock" and meet with them, but some hearts had not been ready to receive Him at that hour.

Bill preached at eleven o'clock. There was attention but no excitement, and I saw the crackers were not pleased.

"Bill done fine, but we uns likes er preacher what kin stir us up. Bill ain't the stirrin' kind. We uns 'll ax yer son ter preach ter night, and see what he kin do. Thar ain't no way ter bring folks 'round 'out you kin gin 'em in shoutin' order."

In the afternoon I took a walk and on my return lay down on the grass not far from the tent. Several

buggies were near, and in each a young man and woman were sitting. I was in an atmosphere of cracker courtship. One couple I had noticed before; they were now in the buggy nearest me.

"Thar ain't no use in waitin' ter git er edication 'caze it takes too long, Melindy. Me and you orter marry now, right shortly; what you say ter gittin' off here at the camp ground? You'd be looked at more'n you ever wus 'fore, and ever' body 'd be talkin' 'bout 'Miss Melindy;' now 'tain't wuth while to talk 'bout puttin' it off, 'caze ef you do I'll go an' talk ter some other gal what keers more fer me'n she do fer school."

"Naw you won't, Tim Beck, 'caze I'll marry you right here 'fore this camp's broke up; but thar's wun thing I ain't never tole you what I expects I orter tell you 'fore we uns wed. I's kinder 'shamed ter, too."

"Don't be 'shamed, Melindy; we uns is mos' wed now. You allus wus er backward gal, though; you never will speak right out, an' you'll blush ef I look at you hard. Tell me, Melindy; it won't matter now."

"Well, I don't like ter, but Tim, we uns, dad an' mam an' the chillun an' me, is all metaphysicians, an' mebbe you won't like that?"

"Oh! that don't matter, Melindy; dad an' mam an' me an' the chillun at our house is all Meth'dists, an' I reckon they must be kinder 'like er they wouldn't sound the same. We won't fuss 'bout the Church. What does you all b'lieve in?"

"We uns b'lieve the same as you, but we uns calls ourselves dif'rent; I thought mebbe you wouldn't like the name."

"Oh! that's all right, Melindy; now let's take er ride an' sot the day," and he hitched the old farm mule to the rickety buggy with trace chain and shuck collar instead of regular harness, and they drove off.

Their case was not so bad as that of a Georgia representative, who, when asked the altitude of his section, said: "I never went into stertistics, but jedgin' from

what I've seed, I should say they wus mostly Baptists."

"Yer son ain't the stirrin' sort neither," my hostess said, with a sigh, after the night service.

I slept well until I turned in the night and touched something sticky. I tried to discover from feeling what it was, but could not. I lighted a tin lamp near my bed and looked; the substance was some kind of preserve. The noise I made in rising had awakened the cracker woman's husband, as well as Bill and my son-in-law, who were all in the room with me.

"It will happen so sometimes, Mr. Ramla; 'tain't very pleasant ter sleep on 'sarves; I's sorry. Sary is too keerless. She ought not ter 'a' let the 'sarves drap. But mebby 'twarn't Sary; thar's so many folks eats at a table."

I had seen the woman winding the sheet off of the bed the day before, and her husband's words confirmed my suspicion.

The next day great preparation was made for the morning service.

"We uns is goin' ter have er shoutin' preacher ter-day, what'll do us all good. Yer preachers may do fur Warleskey, but they don't do fur here."

Dinner was being prepared before the service. Mutton was the only meat, I thought; certainly I was conscious of the fact that it was one of the meats. There was great excitement and much shouting at the tent before the sermon; a prayer-meeting service had been held and had aroused the people. My hostess called to her daughter:

"Here, Jinny, come tend ter the mutton an' let me go an' jine the happy folks down ter the tent. I's so glad they's woke up."

She walked rapidly off, and I followed her. She had hardly got inside the tent before she began shouting. After the usual exclamations and peculiar movements that characterized her shouting had lasted a half hour or more, she thought of her mutton, and continu-

ing the movements she shouted, to the tune of "How Happy are They who the Saviour Obey," "Jinny, don't let the mutton burn," and finished in the words of the song. The shouting continued until the people were exhausted, and the morning services began.

I have seen people shout and really feel they served the Lord shouting. I have seen others shout when they were merely screaming, and seemed to have no real holiness of feeling at all, and they kept up their screaming until it became a dissipation and did them positive injury.

After the morning sermon the minister, who, notwithstanding the excited condition of the people, preached in a manner to excite them still more, called one of the old crackers to pray. The cracker prayed with great effort of voice:

"The devil is in ever' wun of we uns, an' we uns needn't ter say he ain't. I wish ever' body know'd jes' how he's pesterin' me now, an' tormentin' ter git me ter go his way."

Just then a stray goat came into the tent, and the old man being the most conspicuous object, it ran toward him, stood off a short distance as if considering what to do, and then butted him in the rear just as he was saying, "Yes, the devil pesters me before an' behind an' ter the side." He stopped short and looked around.

"'Tain't the devil this time, Uncle Bob; it's my old Billy goat," someone said.

The old man kept praying, "Come down an' wipe folks off o' the earth."

"I'd ruther he'd come down and wipe out the devil," another voice said.

That night a number of persons professed to be converted. The minister called on a young cracker boy to pray. The boy began:

"Lord, you jes' orter 'a' been here; we uns has had fourteen or fifteen o' the brightest conversions you ever saw; but you missed it all, Lord, by not bein' here."

The prayer was so peculiar that the minister stopped the boy; and yet, is it not true that at some so-called conversions the Lord is not present? It would be wrong, and my conscience would not allow me, to tell these things if they were not true, but every incident I have recited really occurred.

Another character at the camp-meeting was an old woman who kept shouting, "Praise the Ram."

"You are mistaken, sister," the minister said; "it is not 'Ram' but 'Lamb.' Praise the 'Lamb.'"

"Oh! well," she said, "I know'd it was somethin' with wool on its back."

This was too ridiculous to make the relating of it sacrilegious; the Lord beareth with ignorance.

Another character was a little girl about ten years old who came to Bill and asked him the way to life. Bill taught her plainly and simply, and she started "in the straight and narrow way," in which it is said, "a little child shall lead them," a road so plain that a child may never lose the way, and so plain that many men and women never find it. I did not doubt this child's conversion at the time, and have never doubted it since. She is now a leader in the school and in the church.

"I should not know what to do without her," the president of the college near her home said to me.

Shall any say that the camp-meeting was a failure? Surely it was not. It was the dawn of new life to this child and to hundreds through her, and it was a help to many of the older crackers.

The marriage took place just before we left, but whether the difference between Metaphysicians and Methodists really made any difference in the family policy or not I never heard.

CHAPTER LI.

A few days after our return to Walesca I said to my friend:

"Do you remember that, when Callaway was here, there was some trouble with the whitecaps? I am afraid they are going to give us more trouble now."

"What has happened?" he asked.

"They have punished several men lately, who allege that they were innocent, and that they were maltreated on account of some personal dislike on the part of certain members of the band. If the motives of the whitecaps were ever considered good, they were now impugned. They are said, too, to be in league with the moonshiners; indeed, it is asserted that some of them are moonshiners. I have heard also that some of the school boys belonged to the band. Such association, even if they never engage in the evil practices of the organization, is bad."

"But there are no moonshiners here now," he said.

"Not in this section, but there are some in the mountains."

"Well, I will see that the students do not belong to this lawless band. But what more we can do to lessen the evil I do not know."

"Nor do I; and I am afraid you will endanger yourself by doing even that much," I said.

"How?"

"Why the whitecaps will make you suffer for it."

"I think not; but if they should, I must still do my duty."

The next day the fall term of school began, and a few days later the president called the attention of the school to the matter.

"The whitecaps may have the good of the community at heart, but their methods are doubtful, and their organization is lawless. We are trying to teach you to observe law and order, so that when you leave here you may never subject yourselves to the punishments of the law, but may become worthy and useful citizens of your commonwealth, and thus become worthy and useful citizens at last of the Great Commonwealth. I understand that some of you are members of the whitecap band. I am fearful for those boys; whatever good they may accomplish, if any, is of small weight with the erroneous principles they may learn, and I must beg that they withdraw from the organization at once. From this time a new law is written in the college code: No student will be allowed to belong to the society calling itself 'The White Cap Band.' Any student connected with that organization when he enters school and not withdrawing immediately, or any student joining the society while here, will be subject to expulsion. Every male student must subscribe to this law now."

The students, all but one, subscribed without hesitation. The young man who did not subscribe came to the president privately and said he could not honestly sign the law, because he was a whitecap and did not care to withdraw from the organization. Other members of it in the school had signed the law with no intention of keeping it, but he was not willing to do that. He refused to tell who they were, but was so honest about himself that the president gave him time to think over the matter. We made an effort to find out who the boys were, and found proof against two.

One morning not long after this my son-in-law found a notice posted upon his door:

"Any man who interferes with the White Cap Band, or forbids membership in it, endangers himself."

"As I expected," I said; "you had better be on your guard."

He laughed: "Surely they will not attack a minister."

"They will attack anybody who interferes with them."

That afternoon he said to me: "I must go to see Mol's mother to-night; she is very sick."

Remembering the threatening notice of the white-caps, and being anxious for his safety, I said:

"I will go with you. I had thought of going before you mentioned it."

We rode out together in the evening, and found Mrs. Smith very ill indeed. She asked for Mol, but we had no means of notifying the girl. I felt sure she would hear, though, and come as she had done before. Mrs. Smith asked to see Bill also, and I rode over to his mother's, and brought them both back with me.

Becky Jane, the girl whom Mol had hired to be with her mother, was there. She said:

"The doctor says she kin git well ef her speerits don't git too low. Her speerits is pow'ful low now, though. Mol ain't here; that's what's pestering her."

I told Mrs. Smith again that I was sure Mol would come, and the assurance seemed to brighten her. Bill's presence comforted her most, however, and she said to him;

"You allus did 'pear like my child, Bill, most as much as Mol, an' whin she ain't here, I likes ter have you by. Bill, I wish it had 'a' been so you an' Mol could 'a' wed, but I reckon it's all right like it is."

We went out and left them alone, and when we returned I am sure Bill had sweetened the old woman's life by kind words.

We stayed until a late hour, trying to cheer the sick woman, and, leaving Becky Jane and Mrs. Collins with her, started to Walesca about one o'clock. Bill, who was as anxious as I about my son-in-law, went with us.

When we reached the top of the mountain, a man emerged from the bushes and cried:

"Halt!"

We urged our horses so as to pass him, but he gave a low whistle, and about a hundred men from behind bush and tree were in the road in an instant. The peculiar dress showed that they were whitecaps. They caught the horses' bridles and commanded us to dismount. Bill rose in his stirrups.

"What is this for?" he asked. "We have all lived among you, and you know our characters. What have we done that you should thus attack us?"

"*You* have done nothing; we do not want you, but these men with you have told lies about us and have interfered with our work by forbidding the students of Reinhart College to be members of our organization. They have no right to do this, and we will show them that men who attempt to injure our organization will not escape punishment."

"They only sought to protect the students under their care from the injurious influences of your Society. However much good you may do, your organization is not one to which boys should belong. You teach them lawlessness, and lawlessness may make criminals of them."

"You are a little too glib, Bill; we will take you too;" and they pulled us all from our horses.

They bound our hands and took us into the woods. We tried to reason with them, but they would not listen. We begged to be released, but they paid no heed to our entreaties.

"Nothing will save you but to retract what you have said."

My son-in-law was very calm. "I have said nothing that I should retract."

"Annul the law forbidding your students to belong to our organization."

"Never!" he said.

"This is barbarous!" Bill exclaimed. "Here are the men who have served you for years; the whole state has felt their good influence, but because they oppose

the lawlessness that you have put in action, you waylay and maltreat them."

"Be careful, Bill; there are other punishments than the one we are going to inflict to-night."

Just then a voice that I recognized, though I had never heard it in such fiercely commanding tones before, rang out:

"Halt men! What does this mean?"

"Who is this?" they asked.

"You know me."

I knew him, too. It was the apparition of the mountain.

"If you have any influence with these men, make them release us," I said.

"Release them!" he commanded. "Shame upon your organization, that claims to deal with the vicious! Bill Collins, a spotless, peerless minister, a man whom you all know and should honor; the president of Reinhardt College, who for ten years has served you better than any other man who has been in the country, and his co-laborer, Mr. Ramla. They have been wearing their lives out in your service, and this is the reward you offer them. This act is sufficient to justify the dispersion of this band, and I here and now disperse you."

They slunk back and were soon lost to sight in the woods. The man whom I had begun to regard as my protector, released us and started off without a word.

"Stay!" I said; and we thanked him for his timely intervention.

"It was nothing but common humanity," he replied.

"Will you not reveal your identity?" I asked.

"Not now," he answered. "Be on the mountain to-morrow at noon."

He disappeared and we reached Walesca without further molestation.

When I went to the mountain the next day the strange man was already there.

"I have been waiting for you," he said; "I am now ready to reveal myself."

"To reveal your identity, you mean," I said; "*yourself* was revealed to me long ago."

He smiled. "I shall be brief; I am McCabe's brother. There was a large family of us. We lived in South Carolina. When quite young, one of my brothers—not the one you know—and myself left home. We went North, educated ourselves, and might have become men of influence but we were dissipated. We have both been private detectives and that was my business when I first came here. I was employed by the still-owner who died some time ago, to see that you did not interfere with the whiskey traffic, and, if possible, to keep you from staying. For this purpose I tried to frighten you by my mysterious appearances and peculiar dress at night, and on one occasion, by firing in the road just in front of you. Some nights I stayed in a little hut here on the mountain; that was after I found you came here so often. I was in the hut the night you were caught in the snowdrift. I was rarely here except at night, however. I lived in Cartersville. Few people in this section know me even yet, and they know me by another name than McCabe. I watched you closely, and soon became convinced that you were doing a self-sacrificing work. I then told the still-owner that I would not interfere with you if you should close every still in the mountains. I gave you a map of this section, and when you made your perilous journeys to the stills, watched you as I would have done my brother. I saved your life more than once, Mr. Lamar, for that is your real name."

I thanked him. "Yes," I continued, "Lamar is my name; I told the crackers so, long ago, but they still call me 'Ramla,' since that is the name by which they first knew me, and my occupation is rambling, they say."

"I did not know for a long while that the desperado, McCabe, was my brother. I had not heard from my

family since I was a boy, and did not know that they had moved to Georgia. I was present at McCabe's trial, though you did not know it, and I became convinced that he was my brother. I did not care to make myself known, however, partly because I was a detective, and it was best not to be known in this section where so many crimes were being committed, and partly because I could not have watched you so closely had you known me. After the still-owner's death I got appointed on the regular detective police force, and I have been detailed for some time to watch the whitecaps. I was preparing to present three of them before last night's affair, and that has determined me more than ever to have the leaders punished. Some of the leaders knew that I am an officer of justice, and they were afraid of the consequences if they had obstructed me in the performance of my duty. In the presence of so many it was necessary to make a bold stroke, and the bluff coupled with their surprise at my unexpected appearance, had the desired effect."

"Yes," I said, "it was indeed a bold stroke, and we have to thank your bravery for escaping outrage by those ruffians. You ran a great risk."

"Well," he replied, with feeling, "I was but repaying a small part of my debt to you. Your life here has converted me from the error of my ways."

"Not my life," I said, "but the Christian work here."

"The work has been wonderful," he replied. "I do not care to be a detective any longer, and when I get through with these whitecaps I will quit the business. I have made myself known to my relatives here, and henceforth will try to help them and the world a little."

I promised to aid him, and we parted with a cordial handshake.

He was as good as his word, and after bringing the ringleaders of the whitecaps to justice, and breaking up

the organization, he went to live among the crackers whom we had visited at the time of their camp-meeting, and he is now doing excellent work in helping to civilize that benighted people.

CHAPTER LII.

Mol came in a few days, and I hoped her mother would be much benefited, but it was too late; her strength was gone.

"Mighty glad ter see you, Mol, glad you come 'fore yer mam dies. Don't cry, chile, you's been right ter stay 'way. Thar won't no chance of doin' nothin' here, an' you wus too smart er gal ter be here allus. I's got 'long the best kind. Becky Jane has been good, an' ever' body else has, too. Mr. Ramla has been here, and Miss Katherine and her husband, an' they has all done er heap fur me. Thar ain't been no trouble 'cept I missed you." This was harrowing to Mol. "Taint no use ter cry, Mol, you wus right. I's glad you went. Now, take keer o' yerself, Mol, an' be good like you's allus been."

Bill was with Mrs. Smith to the last, and was a great comfort to Mol in her trouble. They seemed drawn nearer to each other by this sorrow, and I thought were learning to care for each other again.

After her mother's death and funeral Mol was very lonely.

"Miss Mollie, what will you do?" I asked her one day.

"I do not know yet. I have few personal interests now. I think I shall devote myself to helping the world. My first thought now is to educating Becky Jane."

Mol was educated herself. She hardly seemed like the same girl.

"It is so strange that just as I had provided a comfortable home for mother, and was ready to take her to

it, she should be taken from me. It seems almost like punishment for my long absence from her; but I thought I was staying for her good."

I went to the mountain one afternoon. It had never looked more beautiful. Rich in the garb of October, the thousand trees spread their branches in gorgeous beauty; red and orange and brown and yellow blended with wonderful harmony of color; and waving in the wind, with rare beams of sunlight upon them, the leaves seemed an undulating sheet of iridescent loveliness. The white cliffs stood gaunt and rugged and glistening.

I sat on them and watched Hogarth's line as it appeared in curve of mountain, slope of valley, and bend of stream, and I thought, "This is the creative line." The rush of the mountain waters was musical, and my mood was happy. Like a boy at play, I rolled stones and worm-eaten logs down the mountain side, and watched them as they leaped from crag to crag with increasing impetus, and at last found rest in the valley.

Presently a young woman approached and Moll came and sat on the opposite side of the cliffs. I watched her for a while without speaking. She had an easel, and began to sketch the scene upon which I had been gazing with such delight. Her touch was that of a master. Finally, laying her work aside, she rested her head against her easel. Her weariness was of mind rather than of body. Poor soul! she was so lonely. She sighed heavily, and I knew she was crying. I thought at first of leaving her in her sorrow, but sometimes it is a relief to have a friend know our griefs.

"Miss Mollie," I said, "what is it?"

She started, then recognizing me, answered:

"I cannot tell you what burdens my heart; I do not often think of it myself. I know it is selfish. Pardon my weakness and leave me; in a little while I shall feel stronger and braver."

"You have always been strong and brave, Miss Mol-

lie; it is not a weakness to feel as you do now. Tell me your troubles; be sure I am your friend, and if I shall not be able to help you materially, I shall feel for you; your care shall be mine."

"It is only my loneliness and the feeling that, try as I will, I may not hope to realize the ends for which I have labored. I have planned so many things, and labored with such earnestness, hoping that some day my heart's desires would be satisfied, but my efforts, as far as personal happiness is concerned, seem to have been in vain. You remember when you and Bill tried to persuade me to enter school, and you thought it stubbornness in me not to yield; but I was not stubborn; I knew it was not best for me to be educated with Bill and Mr. Callaway. Bill really cared for me then, and Mr. Callaway, though he never loved me, was inordinately jealous, and besides, felt the greatest delight in worrying Bill. I was ambitious, though, on my own account, and because I expected some day to become Bill's wife. I talked to Miss Katherine and she advised me to go off to school. I received a kind letter from your wife, asking me to come to her. I thought it best not to tell anyone. Perhaps I ought to have told my mother, but I wanted to surprise her, as well as Bill. I knew, too, that if she had known where I was, she could not help telling Bill, and it was certainly best for him not to know. I asked Miss Katherine to write to me often of my mother, and of Bill, too. But of course she could not know much of Bill's feeling, so I was troubled, and had almost decided to ask you to write me of Bill, when I met a strange man, the one who inquired about you at our house."

"Yes, I know him," I interposed; "he was the man who watched me so long."

"Well," she went on, "he advised me to have nothing to do with Mr. Callaway. You had already given me this advice, and I had determined to be governed by it; but you never knew that. The man spoke so kindly

that I talked freely to him. He said he knew everything that happened around Walesca, and that if Bill should cease to care for me, he would be sure to know it. I then asked him to write to me when he thought it necessary. I thought I should be able to forget Bill whenever I tried, but when I first heard that he no longer cared for me, it almost broke my heart. I made greater efforts, however, to learn, trying to forget my heart's pain in work. Mr. Ramla, I have never forgotten it. Then I labored to make my mother's last years years of happiness and ease, and just as I had fitted a sweet, comfortable home for her, she was taken from me."

"It is best as it is," I said, "or our Father would not have permitted it. Tell me," I continued, trying to help her forget her sorrows, "where you were all those years."

"At first I was with your wife, except when you were at home," she said, smiling, for I had never seen her there. "I graduated in a female college in your town, and when Miss Katherine went to Wellesley, I went too, and we graduated together, with honors. We were both offered positions as sub-professors. You and Mrs. Ramla did not wish Miss Katherine to accept a position then, but the offer was a blessing to me. The income enabled me to pay Mrs. Ramla all that I owed her—that is, all in money; I can never pay her in kindness. It enabled me, too, to buy the home for mother. But that is now vacant, and I am alone."

I heard a step, and turning, saw Bill. I left them, feeling that all would be right.

That night Bill told me that all was right; that he had for some time felt that his love for Mol had come back; and that he loved her with a deeper, purer and more unselfish love than he had ever felt in the past.

They are now married, and as happy as they deserve to be.

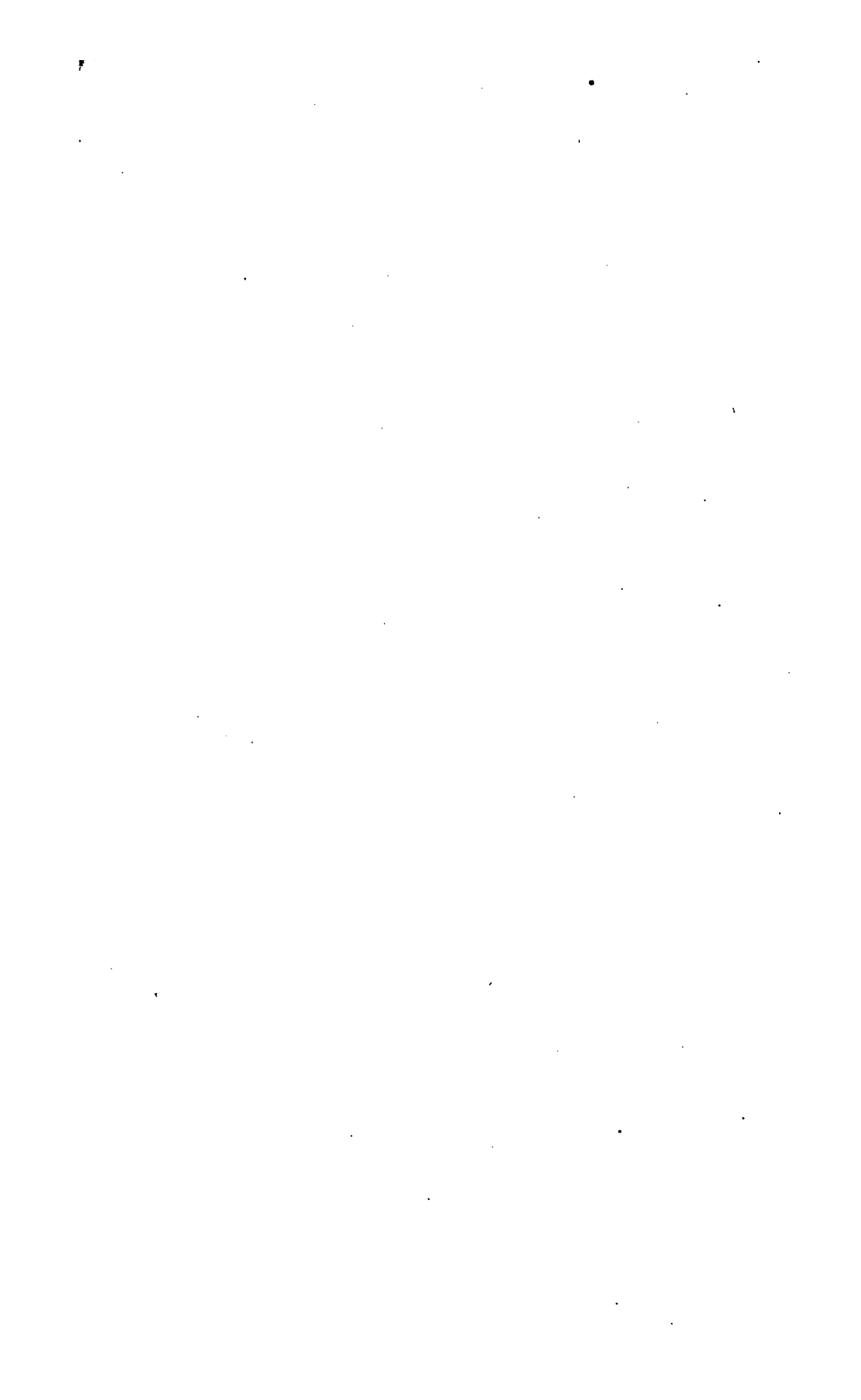
My son and daughter still remain at Walesca; there

seems never a time when they can leave; the place needs them.

All is peaceful and pleasant at Walesca now. The old crackers still complain of the changes, but they are happy even in complaining.

Surely, then, I may at last rejoice over the triumph of "LIGHT IN DARKNESS."

THE END.





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taken from the Building**

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